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Christian Christ

April 15, 2015

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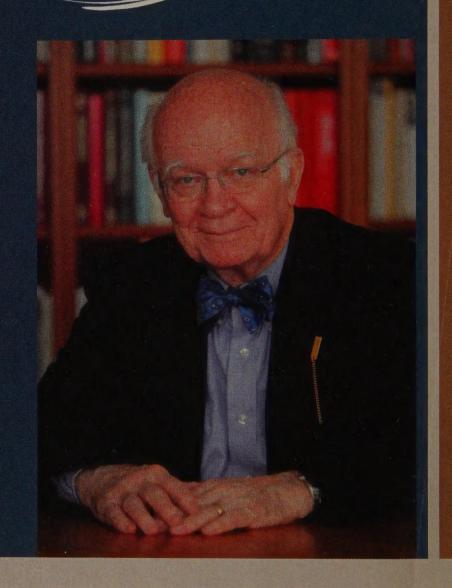
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Editor's DESK

by John M. Buchanan

The path of forgiveness

I'VE BEEN READING a book by Desmond Tutu and his daughter, Mpho Tutu. Desmond Tutu is the former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town. He chaired South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was created by Nelson Mandela's government in 1995 to help South Africans come to terms with their apartheid past.

Mpho Tutu, also an Anglican priest, is working on a doctorate in forgiveness studies. In their book, *The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World*, they include accounts of injustice, torture, and murder endured by blacks under the racist apartheid system, as well as amazing examples of aggrieved South Africans who decided to forgive rather than retaliate.

The Tutus criticize retributive justice and advocate instead for restorative justice. Retributive justice, reflected in most of the world's judicial systems, is based on the assumption that those who do harm must be punished. The Tutus insist that restorative justice is the way of Jesus because it is based on redemption, and on the assumption that no act is unforgivable, no person unredeemable.

Jeanne Bishop seconds their convictions in her book Change of Heart: Justice, Mercy, and Making Peace with My Sister's Killer. Jeanne is a member of a congregation I served; I am familiar with the story she tells. In 1990, Jeanne's pregnant sister Nancy and her husband Richard were brutally murdered. The killer broke into their suburban Chicago home while they were out to dinner, waited for them, and then forced them into the basement and shot them. After six months, police arrested David Biro, a high school junior.

Jeanne describes Biro's trial, his lack of remorse, and his insistence on innocence despite the evidence—a murder weapon, handcuffs, glasscutter, and a notebook full of press

clippings about the murders. Biro was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

Jeanne remembers: "I had gotten what I hoped for—a conviction and life sentence for David Biro—but somehow it didn't seem enough."

The trauma of the murder led her to reexamine her own comfortable life. She gave up her lucrative practice in international law and began working for the Office of the Cook County Public Defender, frequently defending young men who reminded her of Biro.

Already active in gun control advocacy and in opposition to the death penalty, she encountered other people who were involved in penal reform and restorative rather than retributive justice. She began to personally experience the truth that "hatred is like drinking poison and expecting the hated person to die." She forgave Biro and said his name in public for the first time. She studied Christian theology and scripture, rediscovering the stories of Moses, David, and Saul of Tarsus—murderers who were forgiven and restored. "God didn't throw them away," Jeanne writes. "God redeemed them and used them for good."

Finally, Jeanne wrote a long letter to Biro and received a response that included his first acknowledgment of his guilt. After visiting him in prison, she decided that she could no longer support the Illinois policy of life sentence without parole for juvenile offenders. She began to lobby against the law and testified before the Illinois state legislature.

Both books testify to the incredibly hard but hopeful work of forgiving in the most difficult and trying circumstances. Near the end of *Change of Heart*, Jeanne reflects on the parable of the sower and the seeds: "The seeds are sprinkled. My part is to be obedient to God's call to forgive. I cannot change the heart of the killer. But God can."



What is pastoral ministry like these days, and how is it being shaped in new ways?

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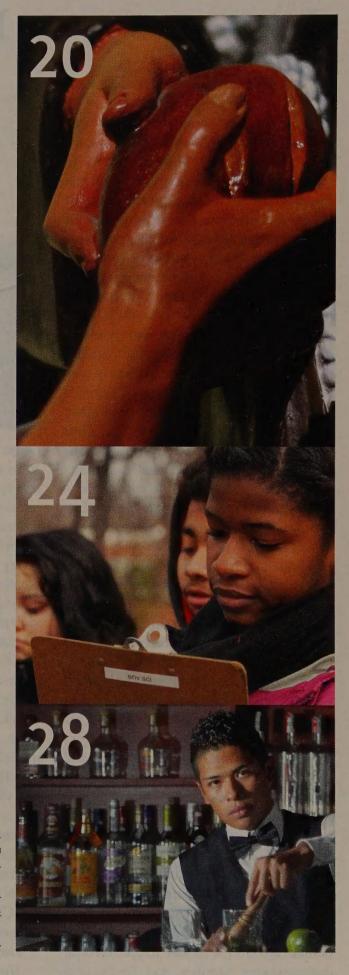
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The Christian Century, (ISSN 0009-5281) is published biweekly at 104 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 1100, Chicago IL 60603. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL, and additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Product (Canadian Distribution) Sales Agreement No. 1406523. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Christian Century, P.O. Box 429, Congers NY 10920-0429.



LETTERS

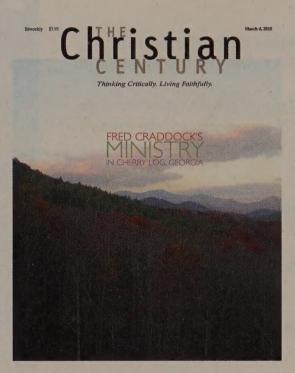
appreciated Ted Smith's argument in "Religious violence?" (March 4) that humans should refuse to violently enforce Christian or Muslim conceptions of God's higher law while rejecting pragmatic conceptions of law that exclude all theological criticisms of unjust human laws. But I disagree with his contention that the Bible's portrayal of higher law is not imperative (enforceable by human action), but merely indicative (descriptive) of God's permeating presence in creation.

Thoughtful scriptural interpreters and theologians have rejected a fundamental separation between what is true of God and creation and what God wills for creation. For instance, the revelation of the Decalogue as given by God (through Moses) and requiring human enforcement (e.g., "you shall not murder") is flatly incompatible with Smith's view that God's indicative higher law requires "no more enforcement than the law of gravity."

Further, Jesus' ministry, preaching, legal criticisms (especially of Sabbath law), saving death, and resurrection were clearly not an argument for the separation of God's indicative higher law from human imperative law. Rather, they were a sustained and embodied plea for closing the gap between higher and human law. As Jesus stated, his birth, ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection were not intended to abolish the law but to fulfill it.

Jesus even helped humans close the gap in his last meal on earth, an enactment of the New Covenant that was clearly a legal ceremony. It provided commands to Jesus' community of disciples that were clearly obligatory ("Whenever you do this, do this for the remembrance of me"). Yet it also offered a critique of human law and a model for its reform, demonstrating sacrifice and forgiveness

Higher law



rather than punishment. In the Eucharist, Jesus embodies the movement of human law toward higher law's relational communion (previously revealed in God's covenants with Israel and in the Decalogue): serving reciprocal, just, and self-giving relations among humans and all of creation, rather than primarily economic, individualistic, authoritarian, orderly, and violent aims that human law too often enacts.

Of course, that leaves enormous room for human freedom and experimentation in the making and reform of human law, which Smith rightly extols. But God gives us our guideposts and ultimate model in communion, and he orders us to fulfill it. Thus it is true that we should not violently enforce Christian or Muslim conceptions of higher law, but not because higher law is indicative while human law is imperative, but rather because higher law's imperative prohibits the use of such violence against all our Christian, Muslim, and Jewish brothers and sisters.

Dan Orfield Houston, Tex. Smith's great article reminds me that no side is immune from violence, and that no politics is free from trying to codify itself. It is not a question of whether theology shapes political thinking, but how—and how it can do such that higher law is not harnessed for the sake of conformity but rather to shatter that which enslaves us.

Neal Anthony christiancentury.org comment

Religious violence . . .

In reading John Buchanan's "Mustard seeds" (March 18), I was reminded of my study of the Old Testament as a freshman in college. By Christmas break I had concluded that the whole of it could be summarized by "God loves you." Yahweh kept coming back to his children regardless of their behavior (and still does).

But as a scientist I am led to believe that all human writings express a view, a prejudice, that belongs to the writer, not to God. We can transcribe only what we thought we heard or saw, and we always have a (subconscious?) purpose in our writing.

The acts of religious violence that Buchanan laments are the ego-driven actions of those of us who live the Tower of Babel story over and over. We are trapped by our hunger for finding the best version of ultimate truth.

I'm equally guilty of distilling the New Testament into the "Great Commandment" that we love God and our neighbor as our self. Christ's teachings are the central message. This causes me to try to see the face of God (or Christ) in everyone I meet (hard work, that).

Bill Pfeiffer Clayville, N.Y.

Christian

April 15, 2015

Threat to affordable care

n March, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *King v. Burwell*, a suit devised by the Competitive Enterprise Institute to cripple a core provision of the Affordable Care Act: the federal subsidies for Americans buying coverage on the federal exchange.

The plaintiffs' case is built on the fact that a phrase in the 2010 law can be interpreted as authorizing these subsidies only for people in the 14 states that have set up their own exchanges. They argue that Congress intended to make an incentive for states to create exchanges—and that the Obama administration is violating the law by instead making subsidies available in all states.

The administration counters that the law's provisions clearly apply to state and federal exchanges alike. Indeed, there is little evidence that the bill's drafters intended otherwise. When Steven Brill was writing his book on the ACA (see review, p. 34), none of the congressional members and staffers he interviewed mentioned that the subsidies might apply only to the state exchanges. Brill noted recently that Senator Charles Grassley—the Iowa Republican who worked on the law but ultimately voted against it—"seemed incredulous" at the very suggestion.

The court, of course, is less concerned with what the law's drafters thought than with what they wrote. It's a two-part test: Is the language ambiguous? If so, is the administration's interpretation legitimate? The ACA's language is rather unpolished, thanks to the convoluted process that produced it. And several justices have been unfriendly to it in the past.

Striking down the subsidies on the federal exchange would be devastating. More than 7 million people have bought insurance on the federal exchange, most with subsidies. They would lose the subsidies, and many would lose their coverage. This in turn could destabilize the wider insurance market. Much of the ACA's success would be swiftly undone.

Law scholar William Baude offers a novel response in the event that the court sides with the plaintiffs: the administration could interpret the ruling to apply only to the four individuals CEI recruited to bring suit. It's a politically

explosive proposal, but it draws attention to a strange fact of this case: to sue, one has to be in a position to be harmed, and here the alleged harm is a subsidy—a tax credit—that helps people buy insurance. It's hard to imagine people lining up to lodge complaints against their own tax credits.

Obamacare is no longer an idea. It is how millions get access to care.

Mother Jones tracked down CEI's plaintiffs and found that they're adamantly opposed to the ACA but a bit foggy on the details. One even said she doesn't want to force others off their health care. This is, of course, exactly what King v. Burwell might do.

The ACA is no longer just an idea, a symbol of potential change. It is how millions of people now access care. Yet the court stands poised to gut it over an ambiguous phrase. The politics of Obamacare opposition continues to blind the plaintiffs and others to the concrete good the law is doing.

marks

CLEAVE TO IT: When Andrew Solomon was preparing for a literary career, a friend put him in touch with a well-known British biographer. The biographer agreed to meet with Solomon to talk about his future. He was expecting to get advice like this: "You must call so-and-so at this number and say I suggested it and he will publish you and give you loads of money." Instead, the biographer said: "I have only one piece of advice for you. Have a vision and cleave to it" (New Yorker, March 11).

IMAGINE IT: When Toni Morrison taught creative writing at Princeton University, all her students had been told in previous classes to write about what they knew. She said to forget that advice because first, they didn't know anything yet, and two, she didn't want to read about their experiences. She told them to

imagine people outside their own experience, such as a Mexican waitress in Rio Grande who could barely speak English. It was amazing what these students came up with, Morrison said, when they were given license to imagine something outside their realm of experience (*American Theatre*, March 10).

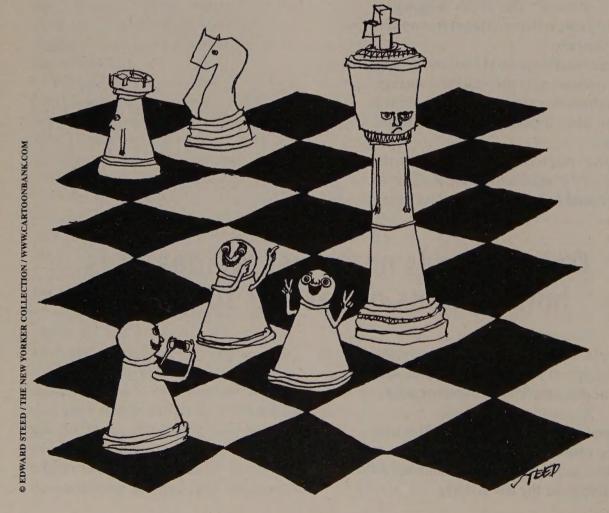
INHOSPITABLE: Max Villatoro, 41, came to this country in 1995 from his native Honduras. In 1999 he was arrested for drunk driving. He turned his life around, got married, had four children, and became a Mennonite pastor in Iowa City. Despite trying for years to get legal status, he was recently taken into custody and sent back to Honduras, separating him from his family and congregation. Villatoro's lawyer, who has worked many similar cases, says he has never seen so many people petitioning for one

of his clients. The advocacy didn't stop Immigration and Customs Enforcement from going against President Obama's commitment to deport "felons, not families" (KCRG.com, March 20).

ALCOHOL FREE: Recently three fraternities have been either closed or suspended by their national organization. Caitlin Flanagan made a yearlong study of the Greek fraternity system and concluded that alcohol is the root of fraternity problems. When Phi Delta Theta decided 12 years ago to make its houses alcohol free, people predicted its demise. "It's more popular than ever, and its amount of sexual assault, hazing, assault and battery . . . have [sic] dropped by 85 percent," Flanagan says. "If you get alcohol out, you'll reform the system" (NPR, March 21).

SEISMIC EXPERIENCE: In 1906, the year of the big earthquake in San Francisco, William James was teaching at Stanford. The famous Harvard psychologistphilosopher awoke the morning of April 18 and felt the bed "waggle," as he put it later. After checking on his wife Alice, he made his way into the center of San Francisco to observe firsthand what was happening—which he considered thrilling and uncontrollable—and to talk to people about what they were experiencing. At the end of the next day his journal entry read, "Talked Earthquake all day" (Susan Engel, The Hungry Mind, Harvard University Press).

HERE WE STAND: In anticipation of the 500-year celebration of the Protestant Reformation, a "Luther Reading Challenge" is being launched by the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. Writings of Martin Luther are being made available online. Persons who sign up for a free account can engage in online discussion groups with people around the world in English



and other languages, including Hungarian, Chinese, and Portuguese (www.lutherreadingchallenge.org).

ENGLISH ONLY: A school district 65 miles northwest of New York City arranged to have the Pledge of Allegiance recited in five different languages during National Foreign Language Week. When an Arabicspeaking student recited the pledge in Arabic, some students responded with angry catcalls, and the Pine Bush High School superintendent received complaints from Jews and from residents who had lost loved ones in the war in Afghanistan. The school district said the intent was to show that people who speak other languages could pledge allegiance to the United States in their native language. It promised that only English would be used in the future (Independent, March 29).

SUNDOWN TOWN: In Goshen City, a small city in northern Indiana, the city council recently passed a resolution recognizing that it once systematically excluded minorities. The city was mentioned in historian James Loewen's book Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism, about communities where black people were expected to leave town by sundown. The Goshen resolution also called for working toward greater equality and justice in the future. "Goshen needs to take steps to hire black teachers, black police officers, and even garbage collectors and to house them in the city," Loewen said. Goshen has a substantial Hispanic population (Elkhart Truth, March 17).

NO HOLY DAYS: New York City mayor Bill de Blasio announced recently that the city's public school system would add two Islamic holy days to the number of religious holidays recognized. Why stop there? asked Stephen Prothero, religion professor at Boston University. Why not mark the winter solstice for Wiccans or celebrate Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights? Adding more religious holidays would recognize the nation's diversity, but it would not be practical, said Prothero. He urged a move in the other direction: no religious

Imagine a white American president calling on whites to vote because 'blacks are voting in large numbers.' ??

— Hebrew University professor **David Shulman**, castigating Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for urging Jewish voters to rush to the polls on election day in Israel because "the Arabs are voting in droves" [New York Review of Books, March 21].

We are living in an anti-art age. The world is now a brutal place and obsessed with speed and wealth.

 Singer-songwriter Paul Simon, speaking on his musical career and the music industry at Princeton University. Simon predicted students studying music now will lead a music revolution like the 1960s (Princeton.edu, March 4).

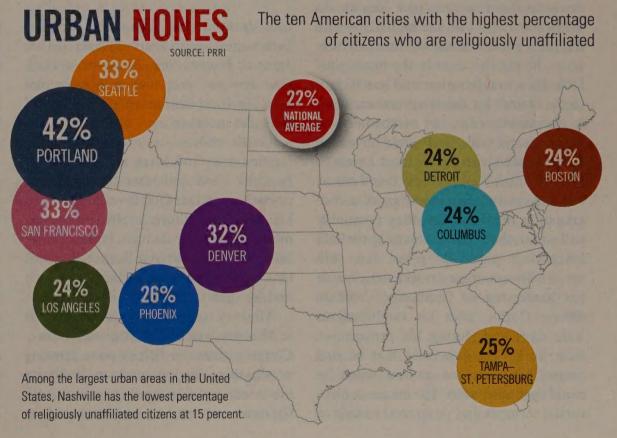
holidays on the school calendar (Wall Street Journal, March 10).

LOCATION, LOCATION: Auto insurance is often higher in zip codes with large numbers of minorities. California has repealed a law allowing the practice, although many like it are still in force elsewhere. The practice makes geography more important than driving record in setting rates. Inner-city drivers are in effect subsidizing the premiums of suburban and rural drivers (*Foreign Affairs*, March/April).

FOLLOWING THE MONEY: Benjamin Netanyahu, who recently won reelection as prime minister of Israel,

received 90 percent of his campaign contributions from the United States. Three families from the U.S. gave 30 percent (*Harper's*, March).

preacher Creflo Dollar has apparently changed his mind about soliciting money to purchase a luxury jet priced at over \$65 million. An online video urged his "existing partners" to give \$300 each, an amount large enough to buy the plane of his dreams. The video has been taken down, and his publicist says there is no longer a campaign for the Gulfstream G650 jet. The popular pastor from Atlanta is using commercial flights instead (AP).



All ministry is local

A pastor's place

by Michael L. Lindvall

IF YOU'RE A PASTOR and cannot come to love the congregation you serve, cannot love the culture and community in which that congregation is set, you must leave. Ministers cannot effectively serve people they don't love. And if a pastor is at odds with the culture of the larger community, members of the congregation will soon recognize it and view their minister as he views himself—as an outsider.

I once attended a church conference on the high plains of north-central Kansas. The landscape was stark—rolling prairie, waving grasslands, flint hills, and few trees, often no trees. I commented on the strange loveliness of it to an older woman over coffee one morning. She said, "Not everyone thinks it beautiful. I was on the pastor nominating committee for our church a while back. We had a candidate we liked from New Jersey. I drove to the airport to pick him up. As we headed west into the high plains and the trees got fewer and the towns farther apart, he got the 'deer-in-the-headlights' look. He was talking less and less. We got to the church for the interview and right in the middle of it, out of nowhere, he stood up and said, 'God would never call me to a place with so few trees. I want to go home now." Better now than later.

Conversely, when members of a congregation recognize—as they invariably will—that their pastor loves them and loves their particular place, they will almost always come to welcome his or her leadership or "authority." William Sloane Coffin, after his rambunctious Yale days and during his provocative New York City days, said that he had always been amazed at how much he could "get away with" (he meant controversial sermons and programs) as long as

his people knew he loved them and respected their opinions.

The legendary Tip O'Neill opined, "All politics is local." All ministry is local, too, perhaps even more so than politics. There is no such thing as "ministry in general"; it's always ministry in a specific place, among specific people, and in a specific culture. Every pastor is *in loco pastoris*.

In this way ministry is parallel to the specificity of the incarnation. By definition, the incarnation had to be in one person whose physical body was short or

homey, rural, small-town, big city, Bach or country western. God loves each congregation and each context in and for its particularity. A pastor is called to see his or her place and people with God's "lover's eye," and to love them for their particularity.

Two vocational metaphors describe the relationship between pastor and congregation. Each has some value but can be problematic as well. First, it is commonplace to speak of pastors as "professionals." The word suggests education and specialization akin to that of, say, a

Ministry is incarnationally specific. There is no such thing as "ministry in general."

tall, dark or fair, handsome or not. Incarnation was in Jesus of Nazareth, not Jesus of Everywhere. Jesus was a Galilean Jew and not, say, an Alexandrian Jew. He lived his incarnate life in one time and no other.

God's choice of a unique person implies that God loves the specificities in which God embodies the Divine. It doesn't mean that God loves Jesus' body, his time, his culture, or his geography more than other human bodies, other times, or other cultures. Rather, it means that all are greatly loved, but loved in and for their uniqueness.

Ministry too is incarnationally specific. Ministry is rural, urban, or small-town. Congregations are rich or poor, growing or shrinking, happy or dour. Buildings are lovely or leaky, too big or too small. Cultural contexts are sophisticated or

physician or an attorney. "Professional" may also imply something about social position and be a measure of recognition that many clergy long for in our post-Constantinian disestablishment. To be a professional may also imply that one does one's work well—"professionally."

These nuances may be helpful, but another implication of "professional" is not. A professional is a provider of services who is generally called to keep a "professional distance." The implication is that the pastor-as-professional is educated to know things that others do not fully understand (biblical Greek or the mysteries of higher criticism) or trained in skills (pastoral counseling or group dynamics) that he or she offers to the congregation. The assumption is that the people in the congregation are less educated theologically and untrained in

the skills of "professional ministry." Understood this way, the image of pastoras-professional can create a distance between laity and clergy that's not so much about how close you are to God as how close you are to knowing it all.

The term may make a fit point about education and competence, but its implications about social status are mostly self-aggrandizing, and the implication of special ministry skills and theological expertise tends to turn ministry into technique—a bag of tricks and arcane seminary gnosis. This understanding of pastor can distance "pastor service providers" from the congregations to which they offer their sundry professional services.

second metaphor for pastoral ministry that's sometimes appropriate but also problematic is "pastor as prophet." The church is clearly called to a prophetic ministry. But the role belongs to the church as a whole—to congregations and judicatories as well as national and global ecclesiastical bodies. It involves individual pastors insofar as they lead their congregations or denominations in finding their common prophetic voice.

The prophetic metaphor for pastoral ministry becomes problematic when the model of prophecy in the Old Testament—a prophet speaking for God to fallen Israel and calling the people back to covenant faithfulness—is recast so that the pastor is the prophet speaking for God and calling the fallen church back to faithfulness.

The perils here are potentially deadly to the relationship between pastor and congregation. Rather than perceiving themselves to be called to a prophetic role against the congregation, pastors need to understand themselves as called to a prophetic role with the congregation against injustice and unrighteousness. Of course, injustice and unrighteousness are not merely "out there" in the world, but also in and among the people of God, the pastor included.

In practice, this is a fine line for pastors and preachers to walk. Loading sermons with first-person plural pronouns—we's and us's when speaking of some manifestation of unrighteousness—won't suffice.

Pastors are called to identify with their congregations and communities and to acknowledge both a complicity in injustice and a call to resist that complicity. For instance, whenever a Sunday Gospel text offers up Pharisees and scribes, my hermeneutical mantra is to cast them in the sermon as "us," never as "you the congregation" or "those people," but "all of us," or at least "some part of all of us"—the minister included.

Pastors who've grown angry with the world's injustices and inequities, angry with ministry, and angry with their congregations can too easily slip into scolding their congregations, usually subtly, often with aggressiveness clothed in clerical passivity. They justify it by donning the prophet's mantle, which allows them to imagine that their behavior is courageous.

A congregation will not be led by badgering or scolding. If the members of a congregation aren't responding to a call that God may have set before them, it takes the pastor time, love, and patience to grow with them toward a shared response.

third metaphor, the metaphor of marriage, is sometimes used to speak of the relationship between pastor and congregation. It doesn't work. What happens when a pastor leaves? Does the marriage become a divorce? I'm more drawn to the metaphor of lover and beloved.

In my experience, people in love seem to see the one they love "hopefully." Lovers are not so much blind as they are empowered to see their beloved with hope. Although people in love recognize the flaws and weaknesses of their beloved ones, they somehow also see them as lovable and full of promise.

This, of course, is precisely the way God sees you and me—simul justus et peccator, "saint and sinner at the same time." And this is how a pastor ought to love those in his or her congregation. The pastor recognizes all of their flaws and weaknesses but sees even those imperfections as full of promise.

Speaking at a new members class, a pastoral associate of mine described the mission commitment of the congregation we served. He waxed rhapsodic about the depth and breadth of the congrega-

tion's efforts. After the class, another church member pulled him aside and said kindly, "Weren't you laying it on awfully thick about our mission efforts?" The minister responded, "I always prefer to see my congregation eschatologically." He chose to see our congregation hopefully, through a lover's eye, as who they might become.

In premarital counseling sessions and wedding meditations, I remind brides and grooms that love is a two-sided coin. On one side, I tell them, is how you feel-your passion for each other, that visceral set of emotions that draws you to one another. But on the other side of the coin is what you choose. This side of the coin is an act of will-commitment, covenant, and vow. Feelings have sunny days, and they have overcast days, I tell them. The commitment you promise each other will pull you through the cloudy days. Jesus commands just this kind of chosen love. Feelings can hardly be ordered up, but choices can be commanded, and we can choose to obey them. So a pastor can—and must choose to love his or her congregation as well as the place in which he or she has been called to serve.

When my wife and I moved to New York City 12 years ago, we were jolted by the wealth of the community we were called to serve. There are private schools, men's and women's clubs and dinner parties where reference to informal dress means coat and tie instead of a tuxedo. And there are events at which a tuxedo is expected.

I asked a long-term and successful former associate pastor of the congregation for advice. She offered me strange counsel. "Have fun with it," she said. "Take delight in it as it is. Don't let it swallow you, but find joy in it."

So I bought a tux on sale at Macy's. I see my congregation and my city, with all their glaring and unique flaws, as lovable and full of promise. I love the church, the place, and the people simul justus et peccator. I have no other choice.

Michael L. Lindvall is pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City; his books include The Good News from North Haven.

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Connecting teens to build peace

Seeds of Peace, which has become one of the Middle East's most recognized peace-building initiatives, is seeking to expand its reach.

The organization sees the maturing graduates of its camp program—more than 5,000 individuals—as an important resource to be tapped as it refines its goals. More than half of these graduates are moving into leadership roles in their respective fields.

The organization now hopes to empower them to transform a wide variety of sectors in conflict areas—from women's rights to technological innovation. Such progress, say Seeds of Peace officials, is a crucial prerequisite to any comprehensive, sustainable peace.

"It's not about signing a piece of paper," said Eva Armour, head of programming for the New York-based organization. "The question is, do we have leaders who are working to advance political, economic, and social change in ways that contribute to peace building? What's brilliant is there's actually lots of them."

Attendees at a first-of-its-kind conference in Jordan in February, dubbed GATHER, ranged from Afghan deputy parliamentary speaker Fawzia Koofi to Palestinian computer engineer Hani El-Ser to Israeli activist Lior Finkel-Perl. The primary sponsors were two U.S.-based foundations, Pershing Square and Ashoka.

The event launched a new stage in the work of Seeds of Peace, bringing together for the first time adult alumni from both the Israeli-Arab conflict and from India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In addition, it reached out to like-minded folks working for social change; about 40 percent of GATHER participants had no prior connection to the organization.

"We were more like a club before," said Daniel Noah Moses, director of Seeds of Peace educator programs in the Middle East, South Asia, and the United States. "The organization sees that . . . if we really want to make the change we say we want to make, we have to widen our reach."

The inaugural Seeds of Peace summer camp for Israeli and Palestinian teens took place in the state of Maine in 1993. Participants were invited to the White House to witness the signing of the Oslo Accords that September between Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Seeds of Peace rode that momentum of hope for years. But like myriad other peace-building initiatives that sprang up post-Oslo, the organization faced a backlash of cynicism when the second intifada broke out in 2000.

One of the first victims of the intifada was 17-year-old Asel Asleh, an Arab citizen of Israel and one of the organization's most enthusiastic alumni, who was killed by an Israeli policeman on the sidelines of a protest. He died wearing his Seeds of Peace T-shirt.

"Some people say, 'Look at all he was trying to do, and he was still killed, so this is worthless,'" said Ned Lazarus, Middle East program director from 1996 to 2004. "Others look at what he said and did, what he stood for in his life. He wrote some amazing things for 16–17 years old."

Among them was a letter in which Asleh intoned a friend's words: "Out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong-



LEARNING TO COEXIST: Orly Bogler, an Israeli, in blue, chats with Nada Amin, an Egyptian, at the Seeds of Peace camp in Otisfield, Maine. Teens from Middle Eastern and South Asian countries eat, sleep, play, and learn to live together as well as talk over conflict in their homelands.

doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there."

This past fall, one of Asleh's Jewish Israeli bunkmates, Tomer Perry, brought his wife—pregnant with their first child—to see the camp for the first time. Under the brilliant red foliage, they found the cabin where Asleh's name was still inscribed over his bed. They chose Asel as the middle name for their newborn son.

"Seeds of Peace has had a profound influence on my life in a variety of ways, and Asel was part of it," said Perry, a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Stanford.

For many, the initial enthusiasm of camp fades as they go back to work or their studies. But a University of Chicago study published in the fall found that Seeds participants who made just one lasting friend at camp retained a more positive view of the "other."

Lazarus, who researched the long-term impact of Seeds of Peace for his Ph.D., found that more than 140 graduates—or about one in five—were working in various peace-building initiatives as adults, eight to ten years after their summers at camp and despite living through the intifada, which killed more than 4,300 Israelis and Palestinians.

"Do you want to call that success or not? It's up to you," he said. "To take on this identity of someone working for peace is to decide to have arguments with your society every day of your life. It takes tremendous energy and commitment."

Indeed, such individuals are in a minority. In Israel, for example, support for a two-state solution hit a record low this fall after the Gaza war, and leftists and peace activists have been marginalized—but not deterred.

"It's not that I'm naive," said Finkel-Perl, executive director at the Peace NGO Forum. "I encounter the challenges and the risks of working together every day."

She attended the Seeds camp in 1996 shortly after Prime Minister Rabin's assassination by a right-wing Israeli. She answered cynics of peace building with a question of her own: "What is the alternative?" —Christa Case Bryant, *The Christian Science Monitor*

Zaytuna becomes first accredited Muslim college

Zaytuna College, a five-year-old institution in Berkeley, California, is now the first fully accredited Islamic university in America.

It was recognized in March by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, an academic organization that oversees public and private colleges and universities in the United States.

The accreditation means that Zaytuna, which owns two buildings and has 50 students and a faculty of 15, is officially an institution of higher learning. It is only a few blocks from its esteemed neighbor, the University of California, Berkeley.

"It really signifies that we have new possibilities of relationships with faculty colleagues across the nation," said Colleen Keyes, Zaytuna's vice president of academic affairs. "It puts us in a relationship with both



Colleen Keyes

undergraduate faculties and graduate seminaries and schools of theology, of which there are a lot here in Berkeley."

Zaytuna's students are both U.S.-born and foreign-born and come from Pakistani, Arabic, Turkish, African-American, and Latino backgrounds. All Zaytuna's current students identify as Muslims, but there is no religious requirement for admission, Keyes said.

However, Zaytuna—the Arabic word for the olive tree—remains unique among American colleges and universities in that it requires students to learn Arabic so they can study Islamic texts, including the Qur'an, in their original forms. And it offers only one degree—a bachelor of arts in Islamic law and theology.

Students spend their entire first year immersed in a classic liberal arts curriculum that includes rhetoric, logic, English grammar, composition, and the great works of Western literature. At the same time, they study Arabic and Islamic law, history, science, and math. They must memorize and recite a chunk of the



ISLAMIC LIBERAL ARTS: Mark Delp teaches formal logic to first-year students at Zavtuna College.

Qur'an before they can graduate, as well as perform community service.

Students "understand there is not a dichotomy between Islam and the West," Keyes said. "The role of Muslims in America is to think about Islam in a non-Islamic environment and think about how we are American and Muslim at the same time."

Male and female students take classes together, though they must promise not to date while at the school. Tuition is \$15,000 a year, and housing is an additional \$9,000.

Raja Ali, a 30-year-old Zaytuna sophomore, said she chose Zaytuna despite its lack of accreditation when she entered in 2013. But the school's new status means a great deal to her.

"I just feel so much joy, and I am very excited about the future for the college and all the new students that will come," she said. —Kimberly Winston, Religion News Service

Hindu nationalists push education agenda in India's government

Soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's conservative Bharatiya Janata Party swept to power last summer, he appointed a little-known historian as chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research, which funds all serious historical scholarship in the country.

Critics said that Yellapragada Suder-

shan Rao's greatest qualification was his closeness to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a 5-million-member Hindu nationalist organization where Modi began his political career.

A few months into his appointment, Rao recruited three RSS officers to the council. At the same time, he proposed that the institute view the Indian mythological scriptures—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—as historical fact.

In the ten months since Modi's election, Hindu right-wing groups such as the RSS have expanded their influence across much of India's government, say analysts. The groups' role has become especially crucial in the formulation of new Indian education policies slated for adoption later this year.

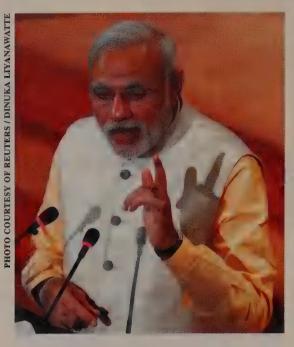
"What we need in India is value-based education, education that will build character," said Dinanath Batra, a leader in Shiksha Bachao Andolan, a pro-Hindu group invited by the government to make recommendations for the new education policy. "We can't do that without religion, so religious studies must become a part of school curriculum. The second thing that is required is a complete overhaul of the current setup—every single textbook should be rewritten to reflect national pride."

To that end, Batra recently persuaded authorities in the northern Indian state of Haryana to use a Hindu holy book, the Bhagavad Gita, as part of the school curriculum. He said he saw no problem with assigning a Hindu holy book in classrooms that include Muslim and Christian students.

"What does the Gita teach? That we are all one, we should all be honest," Batra said. "Unlike the Qur'an or the Bible, nowhere does it say you have to worship only one god."

Religious conservatives have flooded India's Human Resource Development Ministry with recommendations that many fear will blur the line between government and Hinduism. One proposal recommends eliminating English as a compulsory language in schools. Another recommends studying mathematics as discussed in the Vedas, the oldest Hindu scriptures.

"Why should we not teach Vedic math or science?" said Ajju Chauhan, the



RELIGIOUS TILT: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses Sri Lanka's parliament in Colombo.

Uttar Pradesh state leader of the Bajrang Dal, one of the most militant Hindu groups. "There is proof in the scriptures about achievements of Indian scientists that the West refuses to accept. We have to create a nation where our students are proud to be Indian."

In December, the Bajrang Dal stirred controversy when Chauhan and others carried out a mass conversion of 15 Muslim families in Agra, home of the Taj Mahal. The families later said they had no idea they were being converted to Hinduism and attended the ceremony thinking it was part of a government antipoverty program.

Modi remained silent about the groups' exploits for his first nine months in office, until a speech in Parliament in early March.

"Let's stop fighting," he said. "Hindus and Muslims should unite to fight poverty. As for my government, we follow only one religion—India first. We have only one holy book—the Indian Constitution."

But Modi stopped short of directly admonishing the Hindu groups that are an important part of his political base.

Gurpreet Mahajan, a political scientist at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said these groups are threatening to derail Modi's agenda, especially its economic focus.

"India is a country that has managed to live in diversity despite the strife," Mahajan said. "Many people see that as the Hindu way of life, where you respect everybody's values. We would like to see that continue—there's a lot at stake." —Mandakini Gahlot, Religion News Service

Pakistan Christians riot after churches bombed

An unprecedented set of riots by Christians in Pakistan following suicide bombings in two churches shows that religious minorities here are increasingly fearful of being targeted in the majority Sunni Muslim nation.

Christians clashed with police and vandalized property after Taliban militants attacked Catholic and Protestant churches in Lahore on March 15, with at least 15 congregants killed and dozens wounded.

The bombings took place in one of the largest Christian neighborhoods in Pakistan, known as Youhanabad, which has nearly 100,000 residents. Lahore itself is the home of Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

While the Christian protests started peacefully and included children, they turned angry and ugly. Christians took to the streets in a number of cities, and in Lahore three people were killed. A Muslim wrongly accused of helping the suicide bombers was subsequently lynched that day. The following day, two Christians were run over by car, according to police.

The Taliban appear to be using religious minorities as "soft targets" in Pakistan—on the assumption that attacks on Christians and Shi'ite Muslims will win them sympathy with a local audience here that has been steadily radicalized over a number of years.

"The religious minorities in Pakistan feel disconnected when it comes to government policies," said Peter Jacob, director of the Center for Social Justice, a minority-rights NGO in Lahore. "And if such gaps are not addressed, there will be further polarization in a society that is already so intolerant toward religious minorities."

Jacob, who grew up in a Christian household, does not condone rioting, though he can see how it arises, especially in youths from minority groups.

They are "frustrated with government's lack of protection for their community," he said. "There is an utter sense of deprivation among the Christian community and other such religious minorities."

Human rights activists say the government should introduce reforms that improve relations between different parts of society. Studies show numerous forms of discrimination in areas ranging from school curricula to the media to the law.

Christians make up 2 percent of Pakistan's population, which is 95 percent Muslim. Less than 15 percent of those Muslims are Shi'ites, and they resent what they often say is second-class status.

Analysts describe minorities as an alternative target by the Pakistani variant of the Taliban. The Pakistani Taliban's high-profile assault on an army school in Peshawar in December left nearly 150 students and teachers dead. Following a national outcry over the killings, the Pakistan government vowed to crack down and unveiled a national action and counterterrorism plan.

The Taliban's response has been to assault four Shi'ite mosques and now two churches, apparently with the calculation that such attacks would be met with little significant pushback.

"The government does not come under the same pressure from the public, media, and the civil society as it does when mainstream Pakistanis are attacked," said Rabia Mehmood, a researcher at the Islamabad-based Jinnah Institute.

Mehmood, who has worked extensively on minority rights and is compiling a report on the topic, believes that since the pressure is not there, the government response is weak.

"Also, attacking minorities only ensures that terrorist groups like the Pakistani Taliban do not lose their appeal within the larger Muslim Sunni society, especially the religious extremist groups from where they find recruits," she said. —Taha Siddiqui, *The Christian Science Monitor*

PCUSA changes marriage definition in its constitution

A majority of the 171 presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have approved same-sex marriage, revising the description of marriage in the denomination's constitution.

On March 17, Palisades Presbytery in New Jersey became the 86th presbytery to approve an amendment to the PCUSA's Book of Order.

The new language, which will take effect June 21, reads:

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman, to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community.

The 221st General Assembly (2014) of the PCUSA approved the amendment last summer but required a majority of presbyteries to ratify the provision for it to become part of the church's constitution. PCUSA ministers already could perform same-sex marriages in states where such marriages are legal.

Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the General Assembly, wrote in a statement that the 2014 assembly "included in those changes clear language that no teaching elder or session can be forced to conduct a same-sex marriage ceremony if they do not believe it is appropriate."

The PCUSA has had more than 37 percent of its members leave since 1992, while another denomination, the conservative Presbyterian Church in America, has seen a 6 percent increase in the past five years, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported.

"I hope that this can be an opportunity for renewal," said Shannon Craigo-Snell, professor of theology at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kentucky, in the same report. "I hope that . . . some people who have disen-



BEFORE THE VOTE: Commissioners and delegates broke out into small groups to discuss marriage and other topics during the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly in Detroit in June 2014.

gaged with various churches, because they've heard only this one issue, because they heard just a denial of various sexual orientations and ways of loving one another, will come back to the church." —Melody Smith, Presbyterian News Service; added sources

Cases from apartheid era resurface in South Africa

Joyce Ledwaba's son Samuel was 17 years old when he disappeared from their Pretoria home in 1986. Although his body was never recovered, he is believed to have been tranquilized by South African security agents and then burned to death.

Three decades later, Ledwaba is still waiting for the man she believes is responsible to be punished. He is Wouter Basson, who ran a top-secret biological warfare program known as Project Coast, tasked with developing chemical and biological weapons for the apartheid government to eliminate its enemies covertly in the 1980s.

Nicknamed Dr. Death, Basson was never convicted of a single criminal offense. But over the last seven years he has been on trial to determine whether he should be banned from practicing medicine. Found guilty last year, he has yet to be sentenced.

South Africa became a democracy in 1994, but many of the apartheid era's most notorious killers never faced justice

for their crimes. Others were convicted, served their time, and are now becoming eligible for parole.

Under Basson's watch, Project Coast carried out chemical assassinations of antiapartheid leaders, amassed fearsome stores of deadly diseases such as Ebola, and prepared large-scale biological weapons—including a sterilization vaccine—to deploy against the black population.

Project Coast was officially disbanded during the transition to democracy.

When called before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1998, Basson asked for neither forgiveness nor amnesty—unlike others who testified for the TRC—arguing that he was simply following orders from his military superiors.

When Basson's case went to a criminal trial, he fought for close to three years and was eventually acquitted of all charges.

"I am a dedicated and committed medical practitioner and very proud to have served my country during what was a war," Basson told the judge who eventually declared him not guilty of murder in 2002. He remains publicly unrepentant for his actions.

In the years that followed, Basson returned quietly to practicing medicine, leading a successful private cardiology practice in the suburbs of Cape Town. But in 2006, the Health Professions Council of South Africa began its own probe into his past to determine if the doctor had violated medical ethics.

For more than six years, the case proceeded haltingly, as Basson's legal team—who were paid by the state because he was a government employ-ee—repeatedly petitioned to have the proceedings postponed or dismissed for bias and lack of evidence.

In 2013, the commission declared Basson guilty of "unprofessional conduct." More than a year later, however, no sentence has been determined. His counsel continues to dispute elements of the case, and the proceedings drag on in an airless basement conference room of the HPCSA offices in Pretoria.

In the room are family members such as Ledwaba and activists clutching old news articles and yellowing photos of family members and friends they say died at Basson's hands. "We want their bodies exhumed so we can see what really happened to them, but the government tells us it's too expensive," said Marjorie Jobson, an activist and medical doctor who works closely with the families of murdered activists. "But Basson's trials have cost millions that they pay without question."

Mananoko Mokgonyana, an activist, looked to Basson himself.

"The most important thing for us is that he shows remorse, that he admits what he did was wrong," Mokgonyana said. "We are tired of waiting."

On January 30, Justice Minister Michael Masutha announced that parole would be granted to another of apartheid's most notorious killers, Eugene "Prime Evil" de Kock, after 20 years in prison.

Unlike Basson, de Kock—who commanded a counterinsurgency unit implicated in the torture, imprisonment, and deaths of hundreds of activists—has apologized repeatedly for his crimes and helped lead dozens of families to the bodies of his victims.

His release, like Basson's trial, has forced South Africans to challenge their thinking on forgiveness, South African author Antjie Krog wrote in a recent oped in the *New York Times*.

"Mr. de Kock is a problem for South African society precisely because he presents the capacity of an evil man to change," she wrote. "But his parole also reminds us of something more universal: the different life he might have led, had he grown up in a different and more just society. What would he and many others have become if they were not schooled in racism, indoctrinated through religion, and educated into violence to protect an unequal social order?"

Basson's case, however, presents no such neat ending. The trial, though not a criminal one, is a chance for grieving parents like Ledwaba to see justice done. She has been a constant presence at the HPCSA hearings, and they have allowed her to do what she thought impossible: to let go.

"I did forgive him, not for him, but because I don't want to die angry," she said. "I want to forgive, and then I want to forget." —Ryan Lenora Brown, *The Christian* Science Monitor

Social survey shows drop in religious participation over past two years

A new survey shows that since 2012, the United States has about 7.5 million more Americans who are no longer active in religion.

The 2014 General Social Survey was released in March. Funded by the National Science Foundation, this multimillion-dollar study gives us the most accurate data on American society—including religion.

(In the data, each percentage point increase represents a growth of 2.5 million adults. So a three-point rise in secularity, for example, means that about 7.5 million people left religion since 2012.)

Here are some of its findings:

• More Americans prefer "no religion."

When asked their religious preference, nearly one in four Americans now say "none." Up until the 1990s, the percentage who were in this group, known as "nones," hovered in the single digits. The 2014 GSS showed that nones are 21 percent of the population, up one point from 2012.

How large is this group? There are nearly as many Americans who claim no religion as there are Catholics (24 percent). If this growth continues, in a few years the largest "religion" in the United States may be no religion at all.

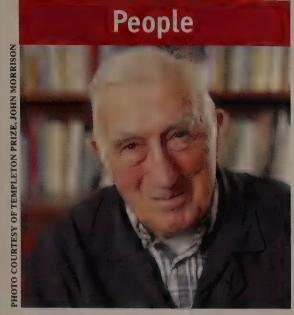
• Americans aren't going to church like they used to.

The number of Americans who never darken a church door is also at a new high. More than a third of Americans (34 percent) never attend a worship service (other than weddings and other ceremonies). This is a three-point increase from just a few years earlier.

More Americans say they never pray.

Even with people no longer identifying with religion or attending worship services, they still pray. But the percentage who say they never pray rose from 10 percent in 2004 to 15 percent in 2014.

—Tobin Grant, Religion News Service



Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche network of communities, where those with and without developmental disabilities live together, has won the 2015 Templeton Prize.

A Roman Catholic layman, Vanier, 86, began L'Arche, French for "the Ark," in northern France in 1964 when he invited two intellectually disabled men to live with him as friends. L'Arche has evolved into 147 communities in 35 countries. In addition, a support group for families of people with disabilities, known as Faith and Light, has spread to 82 countries.

"One can conceive of L'Arche and Faith and Light as living laboratories where Vanier essentially exposed his ideas to the most challenging test of all—real people, real problems, and real life," said John Swinton, a professor at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland Divinity School, in nominating Vanier for the award.

Vanier wrote in a statement that those with intellectual disabilities offer spiritual lessons and gifts to a world too driven by success and power.

"Their cry, their fundamental cry, is for a relationship, a meeting heart to heart," Vanier wrote. "It is this meeting that awakens them, opens them up to life, and calls them forth to love in great simplicity, freedom, and openness."

Exposure to that openness can make those in mainstream culture embrace their own weaknesses and vulnerability, he said.

The John Templeton Foundation, based in West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, awards the \$1.7 million prize honoring "exceptional contributions" to affirming the spiritual dimension of life.

Vanier, who continues to live on the grounds of the original L'Arche community in Trosly-Breuil, north of Paris, said he will donate the money to his charities so they can expand their work. —Chris Herlinger, Religion News Service

Ann Kansfield was sworn in as the first female chaplain of the New York Fire Department in early March.

Kansfield is copastor of Greenpoint Reformed Church in Brooklyn along with her wife, Jennifer Aull. Her father, Norman Kansfield. also a minister in the Reformed Church of



America, shed a few tears as his daughter \{ donned the famous white bell cap and 2 gold-buttoned, double-breasted uniform, becoming a part of the nation's largest and most historic fire department.

Her paternal grandfather, the only grandparent she knew, was a fire chief in a Chicago suburb.

"The fire department was really part of my family's culture and who he was, and so it feels like I'm continuing a family legacy," she said.

She is now one of eight FDNY chaplains, which include three Protestant ministers, four Catholic priests, and one Jewish rabbi.

Kansfield left a job with TD Waterhouse in the World Trade Center months before the 9/11 attacks to become an independent financial adviser, but she was considering another job in the south tower that September. After the attacks, when Wall Street shut down for days, Kansfield began to rethink her career.

"If I had died that day, all that really would have been said about me was, 'Well, she made some money," she said. "And that wasn't what I wanted to be known for."

She had already felt a calling to the ministry. She was the leader of the youth group at her church, but she thought her sexuality was too great a barrier to the ministry at the time.

"In the ensuing days," she said, "I realized that all I wanted to do was hang around my church."

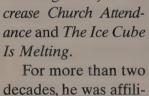
She dreamed of serving the fire department as a minister, inspired by the story of Father Mychal Judge, an FDNY chaplain, who was open with some about being gay. He was the first certified fatality on 9/11.

"Many people in New York knew him for what he did before that," Kansfield said. "He was such a tremendous role model in my life."

Kansfield graduated from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey, where her father was president. —Harry Bruinius, The Christian Science Monitor

■ Lyle E. Schaller, a leading church consultant, died March 18 at age 91.

He wrote or edited nearly 100 books, including 44 Ways to In-





ated with the Yokefellow Institute in Richmond, Indiana.

David Neff of Christianity Today in 2007 called him "the dean of church consultants."

He was a city planner before he became a United Methodist minister, graduating in 1957 from what was then Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.

Schaller wrote for the Christian CENTURY for decades. In a 1969 article on the high crime levels at the time, he considered how the local church would respond. "Will the primary emphasis be on law and order, and only a residual effort made toward solving the problems at the root of violence?" he asked. "Or will first priority be given to securing social, economic, and racial justice, to curing the causes of alienation and placing rehabilitation ahead of repression and revenge?"

Daniel V. A. Olson, currently professor of sociology at Purdue, wrote in a 1993 CENTURY article that one of Schaller's key insights was that congregational size affects "behavior settings," so pastoral strategies have to vary with the size of the church. —CHRISTIAN CENTURY staff

The Word

April 19, Third Sunday of Easter
Lake 24:36b-48

"TOUCH ME AND SEE." I whispered these words of Jesus to myself as I stood with hundreds of others, face to face with a human wall of police in riot gear. We were gathered in downtown Durham the night after the news that the New York City police officer who choked Eric Garner to death would not go to trial. A throng of protesters blocked streets, chanting "I can't breathe" and "Hands up, don't shoot" and "Shut it down."

Touch and see. The police blocked us from seeing them, from seeing their skin, their bodies, their personhood. Helmets covered their heads and plastic shields veiled their faces, distorting their countenance. From their necks down to their combat boots, they wore black uniforms—padded with armor, reinforced plastic and rubber running up their legs and down their arms. Their gloved hands held metal clubs, warning us to stay away. They would not be touched or seen.

But the police touched people. I saw one officer plunge into the crowd to pull out a black woman, throwing her to the ground face first and thrusting his knee into her back as he yanked her arms behind her and bound her hands with a cable tie. The officer touched whomever he pleased, and with violent force—yet he and his colleagues made it clear that they would not be touched by us. Human touch happened only on their terms, and when it did happen, it was not humane. Like the officer who put his arm around Garner's neck, these officers did not seem to know how to touch others without violence.

Once, in a class I taught in a prison, the incarcerated men started talking about which officers and staff would and wouldn't shake their hands. To shake hands was a sign of respect, of mutuality, of recognition that they shared at least one thing in common: their human flesh. The men all agreed that they were grateful for the new chaplain who had started that week, because he looked them in the eyes and shook their hands. I could imagine them saying the words of Jesus, "Touch me and see." Shake my hand and discover that I am human like you.

After the resurrection, the disciples don't recognize that Jesus is fully human, as human as they are. "They were startled and terrified," says Luke, "and thought that they were seeing a ghost." They see him, but they don't see him. They recognize him as Jesus but are convinced that he is not the human Jesus, not Jesus fully alive, not flesh and blood like

their own flesh and blood. For the disciples, Jesus is at first a ghost, an unclean spirit from the grave—Jesus undead in their midst. He is other and strange, provoking fear in the people in the room.

"The only way I can describe it, it looks like a demon." That's what Ferguson, Missouri, police officer Darren Wilson said about Michael Brown. "It" looked like a demon, a ghastly figure. So, Wilson testified, "I shoot a series of shots. I don't know how many I shot, I just know I shot it." Again, "it"—an impersonal pronoun for a nonperson, a being too different to have the same kind of flesh as Wilson's. When Wilson saw Brown, he saw a fundamental difference between their existences. The implication is of blackness as a racial marker of an ontological chasm separating two individuals, blackness as demonic menace—an "it" and not a "he."

The disciples, "startled and terrified," experience Jesus as terror, as threat. Jesus tries to soothe their panic with words of reassurance: "Peace be with you." I imagine him with his hands up, showing that he's weaponless. I picture him with arms outstretched toward his friends, reaching out to shake their hands, to exchange a touch—a mutual recognition of their shared humanity. "Look at my hands and my feet," he says, "see that it is I myself." He's emphatic, emphatically alive, and desperate for them to see him—to recognize him and to know that he is human, not a ghost or a demon or an "it."

The gospel of Christ's peace happens in our touch, in which gentleness is made flesh. "Why not simply try to touch the other," writes Franz Fanon, "discover each other?" To trust in the resurrection of Jesus is to believe in the transfiguration of all flesh, to believe that God comes to us in our encounter with the other.

I want a world transfigured with Christ's peace, with resurrection pulsing through our bodies. The touch of Christ disarming Officer Wilson. Christ's hands in Michael Brown's hands. Christ's touch, full of grace and mercy—not the threat of a police baton, not the violence of a chokehold, not an abusive or deathly touch, but the life-giving and life-affirming hands of Jesus, gentleness made flesh in all of us. We must look forward, as Dom Sebastian Moore puts it, "to the point when the whole mystery of God will be known in the clasp of your brother's [or sister's] hand."

"Touch me and see." "Don't shoot." See my body; see my life. It's like yours, human flesh. Jesus invites his friends to see him as a stranger who is a friend, an other who is the same—to recognize Jesus' flesh in others and to discover that our neighbor's hand offers us the fellowship of Christ.

Reflections on the lectionary

April 20, Fourth Sunday of Easter

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, a neighbor of mine gave me a birdhouse. It was the perfect size and structure for bluebirds to build their nests inside. I put it on a wood post in the yard, which turned out to be a bad idea. Neighborhood cats dug their claws into the wood and climbed up to kill the newborn chicks. The nest became a grave.

I bought a metal pole to replace the wood post. The bluebird couple came back, rebuilt their nest, made some babies, and took turns sheltering their chicks while the other scavenged for food.

This is what hope looks like, stubborn hope—like the way bluebirds come back and make space for life in the midst of a world of death. That's what the gospel is all about: that God makes room for eternal life to grow, for divine love to multiply even in the worst conditions, even in the valley of the shadow of death. The hope of Easter is that not even crucifixion can put an end to God's work of making space for life in the world.

God turns a grave into a place for new birth. God is stubborn for hope, stubborn for life.

The Christian life is all about nesting—about creating a home for the gospel, a shelter for hope and joy and all things good. We are people who build nests wherever we go, wherever we hap-

pen to settle for a season. We know that God has always been mobile, living in a tent, providing the people of God a sanctuary in the wilderness. With violence and hostility and wild destruction all around us, we learn to pray the words of the psalmist: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me."

I remember sitting in a hospital room with a man from my congregation who was recovering from a severe stroke. He was telling me about all the other people from church who had visited him that week—several congregants who brought their hymnals and sang with him, another who brought his fiddle and played Appalachian tunes, others who stopped by on lunch breaks or after work. All those churchpeople, he mumbled to me, made it easier to believe in God. When they are with me, he said, I know God is with me. There at his bedside, I learned from this man that I can't separate how I think about church from how I think about God. The life of a congregation reveals the life of God. "Christ is present to us," writes Herbert McCabe, "insofar as we are present to each other."

When I pray the words of Psalm 23, the "you" I address them to is God. But I hope others will overhear—that they will hear in the "you" an invitation to be with me, to be church for me, to become God's presence in my life. "I fear no evil; for you are with me." This is a prayer for companionship, for us to be drawn together, for our presence to be signs of God's presence and our love an incarnation of God's love.

The gospel can be summed up in the psalmist's word with—that God is with us, that we are with one another, and that we are with God when we are with one another. With involves the companionship of solidarity, and solidarity is at the heart of the gospel. As Dorothee Sölle puts it, "The best translation of what the early Christians called agape is still 'solidarity." God's love means solidarity, the embodied solidarity of God becoming flesh to get as close to us as possible, to be with us. And we find ourselves within God's life when we are drawn into the lives of others, friends and strangers, neighbors across the street or across an ocean.

Week after week, I listen to the prayers of my people—their grief at the loss of loved ones, their pleading for the end of racism, their petition for the end of the violence of guns and

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bombs, their call for God's justice and mercy. As I listen, I feel as if our world has stumbled into a valley of death. The psalmist knows this world. There is no promise here of life without enemies or evil. Instead, in the valley, surrounded by enemies, the psalmist sees a table—a place for fellowship and communion, for being with God and with one another. Around the table—that's where God happens.

As the church, we practice a stubborn hope, the stubbornness of building nests and setting up tables wherever we find ourselves—no matter how precarious our lives, no matter the threats from enemies. We do what God does: make room for people to grow into God's eternal life. The church is a nest where all are welcome to rest in God's love. It is a table where all are welcome to eat and drink God's life. In us, the body of Christ, God is made flesh, and we fear no evil.

The author is Isaac S. Villegas, pastor of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship in North Carolina.

Remembering the poor, remembering the dead

Bridge to God

by Peter Brown

WHEN LATIN CHRISTIANS of late antiquity thought of religious giving, they went back to what for them was the beginning—to the words of Jesus. The words of Jesus to a rich young man encapsulated the whole notion of the transfer of "treasure" from earth to heaven: "And Jesus said to him, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Matt. 19:21; cf. Mark 10:21, Luke 18:22, MEV). Jesus repeated this challenge to his disciples: "Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys" (Luke 12:33).

This notion was also current in Jewish circles. The Jerusalem Talmud of the late fourth century contains a story about King Monobazos, the Jewish king of Adiabene on the Euphrates. He was said to have spent his fortune on providing food for the poor in Jerusalem. His infuriated relatives accused him of living up to his name, which was derived from the word bazaz—"to plunder." Monobazos was plundering the earthly inheritance of his family. He answered them at length: "My fathers laid up treasure for below, but I have laid up treasures for above. They laid up treasures in a place over which the hand of man may prevail; I in a place over which no hand can prevail. ... My fathers laid up treasures for others, I for myself. [For] my fathers laid up treasures useful in this world, I for the world to come."

The commands of Jesus and the story of King Monobazos urged or described heroic acts of renunciation and generosity. By the third century AD, however, in both Judaism and Christianity, the gesture of giving had become miniaturized, as it were. One did not have to perform feats of heroic self-sacrifice or charity to place treasure in heaven. Small gifts would do. But the notion of the transfer of treasure to heaven by acts of mercy retained its otherworldly shimmer. Cyprian, for instance, treated the steady, low-profile flow of alms to the poor as a form of *thésaurisation* in heaven on the same footing as the renunciation of all wealth that Jesus had urged on the rich young man.

In Christian circles, the notion of treasure placed in heaven through almsgiving colored perceptions of other sayings of Jesus. For instance, Jesus had also told the story of the unjust steward. This steward had used his tricky financial dealings to make friends, so that those who were obliged to him might take him into their houses once he had been dismissed from his job. Jesus concluded: "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations" (Luke 16:19). Christians of this period took this to mean that those who received money from believers (whether the recipients were holy persons, clergymen, or the poor) would welcome these believers into their dwelling places in heaven. Indeed, believers could even build their own mansions using the funds that they transferred to heaven through acts of charity on earth.

Moderns are uneasy with the idea of "treasure in heaven."

Heaven was not only a place of great treasure houses, it included prime real estate in a state of continuous construction due to the good deeds performed on earth by means of common, coarse money.

This notion was summed up in a delightful story told in the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, which were written in 594:

There was a pious cobbler, Deusdedit, in Rome [so Gregory tells us]. Every Saturday he took a portion of his week's earnings to the courtyard of the shrine of St. Peter at Rome. With these he gave alms to the poor who assembled at the shrine. The result of the cobbler's charity was revealed in a vision to a pious person. The vision was of a house being built in heaven. But this happened only on Saturdays. For Saturday was the day on which Deusdedit went to St. Peter's to give alms to the poor. The house was the cobbler's "mansion" in heaven, built by the "treasure" that he had transferred to heaven every Saturday through his gifts to the poor. A similar vision revealed that these mansions were treasure houses in themselves. They were built with bricks of pure gold.

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Gregory stood at the end of many centuries of Christian giving inspired by the notion of the transfer of treasure to heaven through almsgiving. Gregory's stories circulated largely unchanged and unchallenged for a further thousand years. But when one turns to present-day scholarship on this theme, we find that the idea of "treasure in heaven" is surrounded by a loud silence. Neither in the Catholic Dictionnaire de spiritualité nor in the Protestant Theologische Realenzyklopädie is there an entry for trésor or Schatz. Nor can such an article be found in the Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion. Indeed, it is only recently (in 2013) that the lucid and refreshingly uncensorious study by Gary Anderson, Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition, has offered a satisfactory analysis of the relation between almsgiving and the accumulation of treasure in heaven in the Old Testament, in later Judaism, and in early Christianity.

Even the few articles devoted to the theme of treasure in heaven have approached it with ill-disguised embarrassment. In one such study, Klaus Koch insisted that when Jesus spoke of treasure in heaven, he must have meant something very different from the meanings that came to be attached to it in later centuries. Belief in the direct accumulation of treasure in heaven through almsgiving on earth (which was illustrated so vividly by the stories of Gregory the Great) was dismissed by Koch: it was "für den Protestanten eine abscheuliche Vorstellung"—"a notion abhorrent to any Protestant."

Modern Catholic authors have been no less reserved when confronted with this notion. A large grave inscription erected over the tomb of Hilary, the famous bishop of Arles (430–449), declared that the bishop, through his renunciation of wealth, had "bought up heaven with earthly gifts." There is no hint of embarrassment in those proud lines. Not so with their modern

interpreters. The editors of a 2001 catalog of the early Christian monuments of Arles suggested, somewhat timidly, that such a phrase might strike a modern person as "a formula which certain of us . . . would no doubt have found somewhat abrupt or heretical!"

It is the same in Jewish circles. Faced with the tale of King Monobazos, even the great Jewish scholar Ephraim Urbach felt ill at ease. He confessed that it was difficult to see in Monobazos's "prolonged and monotonous explanation ... traces of a more refined doctrine ... [some] sublimation of the materialistic simile of collecting treasures above through squandering them below."

Altogether, we are dealing with a notion that causes acute embarrassment to modern persons. Such embarrassment is calculated to make the historian of religion sit up and take notice. Why is it that a way of speaking of the relation between heaven and earth that late antique and medieval Christians took for granted seems so very alien to us? Perhaps it is we who are strange. Why is it that we have such inhibitions in approaching the subject of the joining of God and gold?

Faced by the need to explain modern inhibitions, the religious historian is well advised to turn to modern anthropologists. Their work reminds us that we, as modern persons, are out of step with past ages. They point out that our particular notion of exchange is the product of the commercial revolution of modern times. As the anthropologist Jonathan Parry makes clear, "as economic transactions become increasingly differentiated from other types of social relationship, the transactions appropriate to each become ever more polarized in terms of their symbolism and ideology. . . . Western ideology has so emphasized the distinctiveness of the two cycles [religious rela-

tions with heaven and commercial transactions on earth] that it is then unable to imagine the mechanisms by which they are joined." Nowadays, the thought of such a joining of religion and commerce strikes us as something more than a harmless exercise of the imagination. Rather, it has the quality of a joke in bad taste.

Modern anthropologists have done well to explain part of our inhibitions when confronted with the images in which early Christian and medieval giving practices were saturated. But these inhibitions are not solely a modern phenomenon. As Marcel Hénaff has shown in his brilliant and extensive meditation *The Price of Truth: Gift, Money, and Philosophy*, ancient philosophers from Socrates onward made a clear distinction between ordinary exchanges for ordinary goods and the existence of goods so precious and so nourishing to the mind and soul (such as their own teachings) that they would be tarnished and diminished by being connected in any way with mere money.

Early Christians were well aware of this tradition. They appealed to it relentlessly when attacking the rituals of their rivals—pagan and Jewish sacrifice, for instance—in which large outlays were involved. But they retained the great images of the transfer of treasure from earth to heaven and of the preparation of heavenly mansions through regular almsgiving. These were much more to them than mere metaphors. To adapt the

Through a window

I read a poem each Sunday Our pastor calls this *Ministry* of Verse I try to find a poem not just she but anyone will get A short poem if I can for fear someone like Timmy who isn't all that into poems to begin with may complain

I try to select some lines that represent what I believe and more or less what the people there believe I have friends too outside the church who cannot believe that I in fact believe say in miracles They ask can you really believe they're true

exactly Poems cannot be exact I'm thinking how I'll sound My vanity lives on I don't read my poems which grow shorter as I grow old I once imagined I must go on and on to get at things I thought I knew but I know more than ever

I know nothing now No my friends I don't believe exactly in miracles I believe inexactly I see Mary Magdalene just for instance in that garden quite unclearly Still I see her I see Tess as well who's married to Timmy

and seems confused Well she is confused Dementia has her down Her husband's there He holds her hand Timmy holds things together I've thought at times like anybody I couldn't hold my own yet I'm alive I hear a bird sing one small massive wonder

Sydney Lea

title of a modern book on the role of metaphor in structuring social cognition, these were metaphors to live by (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson). The constant use of the metaphor of "treasure in heaven" charged the circulation of money, on all levels within the churches, with a touch of the glory of heaven.

he notion of placing treasure in heaven through almsgiving remained a metaphor to live by for Jews and Christians because, in the words of Gary Anderson, the act of almsgiving "allowed the individual to enact the miracle of God's grace" on earth. Even a small gift to the destitute mirrored the mercy of God to a human race that was as totally dependent on him for its survival as beggars were dependent on the rich for alms. Almsgiving triggered the ultimate hope of a world ruled by a Creator who would reward mercy with mercy.

Furthermore, on a more subliminal level, the notion of treasure in heaven gripped the imagination because it seemed to join apparent incommensurables. To transfer money to heaven was not simply to store it there. It was to bring together two zones of the imagination that common sense held apart. In an almost magical imaginative implosion, the untarnished and eternal heavens were joined to earth through "unrighteous mammon"—through wealth that was traditionally associated with all that was most transient and, indeed, with all that was

most sinister on earth, all too heavy with associations of violence and deceit and, even when honestly come by, still smelling of the grave. If the brutal antithesis between heaven and earth, pure spirit and dull matter, could be overcome in this way, then all other divisions might be healed.

Not the least of these divisions was the gulf between rich and poor. In the Christian imagination, the joining of heaven and earth was refracted (in miniature, as it were) through the joining of two persons (or groups of persons) in incommensurable social situations—the rich and the poor—through the gift of alms. Hence we should not imagine that the relation between rich and poor in Christian circles was governed only by compassion and by a sense of social justice. Christians could be compassionate. Their reading of the Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament) kept them fully aware of the passionate concern for social justice of the prophets of ancient Israel. But both Jewish and Christian giving to the poor always involved something more than that. Almsgiving was not only a matter of horizontal outreach to the poor within society. It evoked a symbolically charged vertical relationship. It tingled with the sense that almsgiving created a bridge over a chasm that was as vertiginous as that which separated earth from heaven and human beings from God.

For, like God, the poor were very distant. Like God, the poor were silent. Like God, the poor could all too easily be forgotten by the proud and the wealthy. Hence there was an imaginative weight, for

early Christian readers, in the seemingly matter-of-fact reminder of St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians "that we should remember the poor." For by remembering the poor, pious believers (Jewish and Christian alike) took on something of the vast and loving memory of God. God never forgot the poor, while human beings—whether because they were proud or simply because they were too busy—found the poor to be, alas, eminently forgettable.

In this way, to remember the poor was seen as a joining of opposites that echoed, in society itself, the paradoxical joining of heaven and earth, of base money and eternity, and of God with humanity. Without such perilously anomalous bridges (each of which flouted human common sense), the universe itself would fall apart. The rich would forget the poor. The living would forget the dead. And God would forget them all.

ne should add that the transfer of treasure from earth to heaven through almsgiving was not the only great image with which Jews and Christians sought to bridge the many chasms that played a vivid role in their imaginative world. Other images addressed the same problem—how to join the seemingly unjoinable.

In order to appreciate this, let us turn for a moment to

For Paul, remembering the poor was part of the divine remembering.

the parable of Hermas, a Christian prophet who was active in Rome sometime around AD 140. Walking on his farm outside Rome, Hermas noticed a vine trained over an elm tree. The vine was fruitful. The elm tree was dead. He noted: "I am thinking about the elm and the vine, that they are excellently suited to each other.... This vine bears fruit, but the elm is an unfruitful stock. Yet this vine, except it climbs up the elm cannot bear fruit. The rich man has much wealth, but in the things of the Lord he is poor, being distracted by his riches. But the poor man, being supplied by the rich, makes intercession for him."

The rabbis faced a similar juxtaposition of potentially irreconcilable groups within the Jewish community. These antithetical groups were not simply the rich and the poor. Talmudic scholars were contrasted with the ignorant common people—the *ammei ha'aretz*.

A vivid rabbinic saying resembles the parable of Hermas. It spoke of the fruitful and the unfruitful parts of the vine so as to show that each contrasted group in the Jewish community (though poles apart in many ways) was dependent upon the other: "This people is like unto a vine; its branches are the wealthy, its clusters are the scholars, its leaves are the common people. . . . Let the clusters pray for the leaves, for were it not for the leaves, the clusters could not exist."

In both cases, the image of the vine was used to conjure up an ideal of organic, almost subliminal, symbiotic unity. Matter and spirit, fruitful vine and mere unfruitful wood, earthly treasure and heaven (all of them normally considered to be antithetical and mutually exclusive) could be seen to flow into each other. At stake in the Christian communities in Rome, as with their Jewish neighbors, was not simply how to care for the poor but how to maintain solidarity in a community in which the poor represented one pole alone (but a highly charged pole) in a culturally and socially differentiated group.

This preoccupation with solidarity, and with the overcoming of potential cleavages, fits very well with what little we know of the social composition of the Christian communities in Rome that Hermas had addressed. In the second and third centuries AD, most Christians were not rich. Most thought of themselves as *mediocres*—as respectable, middling persons, such as had always found a social niche for themselves in large cities like Rome and Carthage. Their charity was not spectacular. It was low profile and effectively limited to fellow Christians. There was little or no outreach to the pagan poor. Rather, the average "poor" person in the Christian communities was a fellow believer down on his or her luck.

For this reason, we should be distrustful of the highpitched language of Christian writers and preachers of this and later times. They wished to present Christian giving as the joining of mighty opposites. Their language drew a notional crevasse between rich and poor across what was, in reality, a socially low-profile and relatively unstratified community. What mattered for such authors was not to feed the masses but to conjure up imagined antitheses within the Christian community that only Christian charity and Christian prayer could overcome.

It is important, however, to realize that the maintenance of a sense of solidarity in the Christian communities involved far more than the circulation of money. Ritual practices that combined almsgiving with intense prayer on behalf of fellow Christians (whether living or dead) played an even more central role in maintaining solidarity among Christians than did charity to the poor alone.

The crucial issue was how best to express solidarity with the dead. In this, the practice of intercessory prayer was decisive. Prayer was thought to bridge the most poignant of all crevasses—the ultimate, chill chasm between the living and the dead. What was distinctive in Jewish and Christian circles was the manner in which relations with the dead echoed closely the metaphors associated with the notion of treasure in heaven accumulated through alms to the poor.

Almsgiving to the poor became an irremovable part of the celebration of Christian funerals and memorial meals. And it did so, in no small part, because the state of the physically dead echoed with chill precision the state of the socially dead. Both the dead and the poor were creatures reduced to ultimate helplessness. Both depended on the generosity of others. Both cried out to be remembered in a world that could all too easily have forgotten them. But to forget either the dead or the poor was doubly abhorrent to religious groups, such as Jews and Christians, whose worst fear was that their God might forget them.

A model for learning service and responsibility

Character traits

by Amy Frykholm

"PLEASE TAKE A LOOK at today's workshop target and tell me if you have a specific notice or a wonder about it." John Exall was introducing his sixth-grade class to its next "expedition," a semester-long project on American immigrant stories.

"Mattie, why don't you start us off?"

These 11- and 12-year-olds were obviously accustomed to Exall's approach and knew the lingo of "workshop target," "notice," and "wonder." They responded immediately.

"I notice that we are going to be using some texts to do this." said Mattie.

"Ben?"

"My question is what is an 'immigration case study."

"Great question, Ben."

Over the coming weeks, these students at Odyssey Expeditionary Learning School, a public charter school in Denver, paired their academic work with personal experience. They traveled to El Paso, Texas, to meet groups working on border issues. They stood across the fence from children their own age. They listened to anti-immigration groups talk about their beliefs. And at every stage of the process, the teacher was interested not only in whether they were acquiring academic knowledge and skills but whether they were developing traits of compassion, service, inquiry, and responsibility.

Even in the first lesson, where the focus on academic learning was obvious, a carefully constructed lesson in character was being given.

"Give me a pinky," Exall said. "Hold the pinky way down low if you have no idea what a primary source document is and way up high if you are like, 'Primary source documents, I've been working with them since I was born.' OK. I see a real mix within the crew."

The project began with this honest, low-stakes assessment of one's own place in the process of learning. The class was already helping to foster community and humility.

Since its earliest days, American public education has been concerned with moral as well as intellectual development. Early character education, says historian Michael Watz, meant simply using the Bible to teach reading and writing. The 19th-century education reformer Horace Mann underscored the importance of teaching morality and civic virtue. The question of what morality means and how to instill it in children has been a topic of debate for as long as there have been public schools.

In recent decades, with demographic and social changes in American culture, urbanization, and the institution of highstakes federally mandated testing, the question of how to teach character has become increasingly fraught. The Christian school movement that emerged in the 1980s, says Watz, contended that "public schools existed in a moral void." They could not possibly teach character, the argument went, because they themselves had no moral foundation.

In the 1990s, as a response to the accusations of the religious right and to a widespread sense that public schools were plagued by violence and disorder, President Clinton encouraged "character education." The Partnership in Character Education Pilot Project used federal funds to institute new programs, and private organizations like Character Counts! supplied schools with materials and curricula.

Students develop character not through exhortation but by acquiring habits.

Character Counts!, the largest paraschool organization focused on character education, provides curricula on specific areas, such as trustworthiness, caring, and respect. A group known as PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) works with schools to create reward and consequence systems to encourage good behavior.

he problem with such efforts, says Alfie Kohn, an education advocate, is that they confuse character and behavior. Their goal is to make children conform to models of behavior that make the lives of adults easier.

"What goes by the name of character education nowadays," Kohn wrote in his widely read essay "How Not to Teach Values," is mostly "a collection of exhortations and extrinsic inducements designed to make children work harder and do what they're told."

These programs work with a shallow understanding of character and haven't even been proven to work. After surveying the research, Kohn concluded that "the more we reward people for doing something, the more likely they are to lose interest in whatever they had to do to get the reward." Character education that rewards good behavior has the confounding impact of devaluing the behavior being called good.

As an alternative, the Expeditionary Learning model fol-



IN THE FIELD: Students from Capital City Public Charter School in Washington, D.C.—founded as an Expeditionary Learning school—conduct research on species of local trees.

lowed at Exall's school integrates character education into everything it does. The model is based on such principles as "self-discovery," "having wonderful ideas," and "responsibility for learning" (see "Laws of learning," p. 27).

In launching the expedition on immigration, Exall almost immediately turned the lesson over to the students for their project of discovery. He did not even read the "workshop target" on the board before inviting students to wonder about it. The responsibility for the work of learning lies with the student, and teaching this truth is one brick in the construction of a moral human being—and an important contrast with charactereducation programs that mete out rewards for compliant behavior. Exall shared the power with the students as they offered thoughts about what "primary source" means, and he demonstrated that he valued their wonderings.

Other crucial principles of learning were also at work. When Exall said, "I see a real mix among the crew," he was using a term that underscores EL's interest in developing community.

"Crew," said EL regional director Jon Mann, "is foundational to everything we do." EL teachers are trained to look for "full and even participation" and to craft exercises in which the work of any one student is dependent on the others.

Mann said the focus on being part of a crew also allows discipline problems to be handled differently. Teachers rarely send children out of the classroom to deal with a discipline issue. Rather, the teachers raise the question of behavior in the context of its impact on the crew.

Connected with the concept of crew are other principles of Expeditionary Learning: service and compassion, empathy and caring, and diversity and inclusion. An emphasis on being part of the crew does not mean conformity. Mann points out that children are encouraged to express themselves through both voice and dress.

"You notice in the classroom that kids have hats on; they all have their own thing. That is what we want. We want them to come to us as they are, and not have to be somebody else because of the adults' rules."

Finally, Exall demonstrated what Odyssey calls "revision," or what the EL literature calls the experience of "success and failure." Since trial and error are crucial for the process of learning, students are given practice at trying out ideas, and as the Odyssey school motto has it, "leaping in, getting stuck, and pushing through." This is how character is developed.

EL teachers, administrators, and school designers carefully think about how EL principles can be included in the lessons without being heavy-handed.

At Odyssey, values are refined into "habits," and within habits performance character skills are distinguished from relationship character skills. Character is defined not as something a person is, but as a "set of skills students own." Some of the habits are tracked and progress is noted. In the third, fifth, and eighth grades, children are responsible for presenting evidence of having attained habits of inquiry, responsibility, service, collaboration, revision, and perspective-taking (empathy).

he principles of EL also inspire the teachers at Lake County Intermediate School in Leadville, Colorado. The school district has struggled to improve student test scores, and it was put on probation by the state in 2009. It made several attempts to improve performance with little success.

Last year, the school turned to EL in an attempt to refashion school culture as well as improve academic performance.

I asked third-grade teacher Dan Leonhard to talk about the difference EL made in his work.

"Before, as a teacher, I might have said to a kid I was having a problem with, 'These are my expectations. Here's where you are not meeting them and here are the consequences.' Now, I say, 'You and I agreed that patience was something we were working on this year. Where would you say you are in developing more patience? What are some examples of that?' The kids get invested in the process."

Knowing that his class is working on acquiring the trait of perseverance, Leonhard every week puts on the board a math problem that is too hard for the students. He calls it a "Grapple." Instead of praising the student who gets it right or who makes the most progress in solving it, he highlights what he calls "the mistake of the day."

"Who can make the mistake of the day?" he asks. The mistake of the day is the one that helps other students learn the most.

At the beginning of the year, he says, students would drop their pencils when the "Grapple" came onto the board and complain, "It's too hard," and "I can't do it." Now, he says, his class competes to see who can make the mistake of the day. They leap out of their seats to put their responses on the board even knowing that they will probably be wrong.

The language used by each Expeditionary Learning school is specific to that school, but they share a common origin in the work of Kurt Hahn (1886–1974), a German-Jewish educator who was headmaster at the Salem Castle School, a private

Fair exchange mid April—Maine

Gun metal gray the sky this morning and along the shore at dead low tide an on-shore wind blows spume across the wave tops. Rain before dark, they say, and even some late snow to dash our dawning dreams of green and blossoming. Undaunted, a new pair of mallards splendid headed male and female—inaugurate the new-thawed pool beside the dog run of our ocean-front retirement home. Silent, they move across, now venturing among the reeds to break their long migrating fast. and seek a secure nesting place to lay the future. Blessing their ancient quest, I call to mind one week ago, on this same daybreak dog walk, I was surprised, almost alarmed, by one great, stately snow white egret, with his mate, also foraging among the weeds, as the larger of them rose, spread his quite angelic wings, and wafted a bright unexpected blessing to my aging head, as he moved on in search of richer waters.

J. Barrie Shepherd

boarding school in Germany. During Hitler's regime, the staff at Salem was asked to sign a loyalty pledge to Hitler, and all refused. Hahn was put in prison. Influential friends in Great Britain worked to free him, and he was released on the condition that he leave Germany. He went to Scotland, where he became headmaster at Gordonstoun and continued to refine the educational model he developed at Salem.

In Scotland, Hahn converted to Christianity and came to view the parable of the Good Samaritan as fundamental in his own philosophy of education. His question became: How do we educate people capable of being Good Samaritans?

Knowledge in and of itself is insufficient, he decided. Young people needed training in virtue, bravery, self-reliance, and curiosity. His model of education came to include the need for diversity in ethnic background and social class in the classroom; rescue and first responder training; physical, emotional, and mental fitness; and intentional teaching of empathy, caring, and compassion.

The story of the Good Samaritan is, in Hahn's reading, a universal paradigm that encourages people to look beyond their boundaries and form social bonds with people different from themselves. In this way, it may be particularly, perhaps surprisingly, relevant to 21st-century education.

Hahn's educational proposals took many different forms over the next several decades. In the United States, they led most famously to Outward Bound—an organization offering outdoor adventures for individuals or groups. (Hahn is also credited with creating the models that led to the International Baccalaureate programs and United World Colleges.)

In the early 1990s, a group of educators largely from Harvard wondered if Hahn's principles could be reconfigured to answer the crisis in American public education. The Harvard group wrote up ten "design principles" and founded Expeditionary Learning as a nonprofit organization to experiment with how Hahn's principles might be adapted for public schools.

In 1993 five schools agreed to experiment with Expeditionary Learning. These ranged from a school startup in New York to a long-established elementary school in Dubuque, Iowa. Scott Gill, a school designer for the Expeditionary Learning organization, was a teacher in the Dubuque school when EL was introduced. He said he took the EL proposal home for the weekend and connected immediately. "This was exactly what I wanted my classroom to be," he said.

The core teaching practice of Expeditionary Learning is the expedition—a demanding project that requires multiple skills, creativity, and teamwork. After Exall's classroom finished the expedition on immigration, it began a science-oriented expedition on water quality that had the students tromping through the local Platte River, taking water samples, analyzing the samples, and discussing and writing about the problem of water quality in the region. One wall in the school was dedicated to housing waders and boots.

Hahn said, "It is the sin of soul to force young people into opinions—indoctrination is of the devil—but it is culpable neglect not to impel young people into experiences." Through experiences, young people are shaped as learners and as human beings, and they will once again have the opportunity to put principles into action to create habits.

Implementing this vision remains a challenge for Odyssey and perhaps all Expeditionary Learning schools. "It has been fairly easy to get people on board to identify what the habits are and what the specific targets are," said Mann. "The challenge is making them actionable in the classroom and really making sure that time is given to unpack the [character] targets and to make them happen."

In an era when commentary on public schools is dominated by talk of test scores, Expeditionary Learning schools are under constant pressure to demonstrate that their methods create good test-takers as well as good human beings. EL leaders continue to talk about fostering an "expanded notion of success." The building of character is long-term work. It isn't accomplished in one expedition or in one year or by one heroic teacher. Character comes from skill, habit, and practice.

"This is about growing trees, not about planting one garden," Mann said. "We try to build the system and structures so that people understand this is a way that we operate regardless of individuals."

"I think our message of an expanded notion of achievement is hard to hear," said Mann. "People get it, but when it comes to institutions and politics, it is too complex a concept to be grasped. We try just to keep asking for them to think more broadly than they do now."

LAWS OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

Seven Laws of Salem

These educational principles, influential in the development of Expeditionary Learning in the United States, were developed by Kurt Hahn at the Salem Castle School in Germany in about 1930.

- 1. Provide young people the chance to discover themselves and face challenges.
- 2. Provide young people with the experience of both victory and defeat.
- 3. Teach them to put pursuit of the common good before personal ambition.
- 4. Make time for silence, make space for contemplation.
- 5. Train imagination and the ability to look ahead and plan.
- 6. Take sports and games seriously, but do not let them dominate.
- 7. Liberate the children of the rich and the powerful from the paralyzing awareness of their privilege.

Principles of Expeditionary Learning

Outward Bound and other Expeditionary Learning programs have developed these principles, based on Kurt Hahn's original "laws."

1. Primacy of Self-Discovery

Learning happens best with emotion, challenge, and the requisite support. People discover their abilities, values, passions, and responsibilities in situations that offer adventure and the unexpected. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students undertake tasks that require perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline, and significant achievement. A teacher's primary task is to help students overcome their fears and discover that they can do more than they think they can.

2. The Having of Wonderful Ideas

Teaching fosters curiosity about the world by creating situations that provide something important to think about, time to experiment, and time to make sense of what is observed.

3. The Responsibility for Learning

Learning is both a personal process of discovery and a social activity.

4. Empathy and Caring

Learning is fostered best in communities where students' and teachers' ideas are respected and where there is mutual trust, where older students mentor younger ones, and students feel physically and emotionally safe.

5. Success and Failure

All students need to be successful if they are to build the confidence and capacity to take risks and meet increasingly difficult challenges. But it is also important for students to learn from their failures, to persevere when things are hard, and to learn to turn disabilities into opportunities.

6. Collaboration and Competition

Individual development and group development are integrated so that the value of friendship, trust, and group action is clear. Students are encouraged to compete not against each other, but with their own personal best and with rigorous standards of excellence.

7. Diversity and Inclusion

Both diversity and inclusion increase the richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and respect for others.

8. The Natural World

A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world refreshes the human spirit and teaches the important ideas of recurring cycles and cause and effect. Students learn to become stewards of the earth and of future generations.

9. Solitude and Reflection

Students and teachers need time alone to explore their own thoughts, make their own connections, and create their own ideas. They also need to exchange their reflections with other students and with adults.

10. Service and Compassion

We are crew, not passengers. Students and teachers are strengthened by acts of service to others.

-AF

Churches engage with gangs in El Salvador

Truce

Text and photographs by Paul Jeffrey

WHEN I TOLD the taxi driver that I wanted to go to San Salvador's Mejicanos neighborhood, he told me no. It was simply too dangerous. My pleas got me nowhere, so I called a contact at the Catholic church where I was headed. I put him on the phone with the *taxista*, and after a long conversation the driver finally agreed. He'd been told exactly which route to take. If we were stopped along the way, we were to say we were going to St. Francis of Assisi Church, which is considered neutral territory in a landscape bloodied by ruthless gangs and those who pursue them.

Neutral territory is hard to find these days in any discussion of Central American gangs, which got their start when young people who had fled the regions' wars returned from the United States, bringing with them an identity and culture they'd formed as protection against other gangs in U.S. cities like Los Angeles. Mixed with a postwar economy that failed to ameliorate poverty, along with an abundance of leftover weapons and shifting patterns in drug traffic northward, within a decade the gangs in El Salvador helped boost levels of violence back to what they were during the civil war. Gang members from the two dominant groups—the MS-13 and Barrio 18—fought each other for control over territories where they forced transport companies and businesses to pay "the rent" or suffer the consequences.

While the gangs weren't the only violent actors, with their stigmatizing tattoos they were the most visible, and they quickly became scapegoats for a long list of social evils. With U.S. funding, governments in the region's Northern Triangle—Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala—instituted a military response of violent repression and mass imprisonment. Merely looking like a gang member—what authorities called illicit association—was enough to earn young men long sentences in overcrowded prisons plagued by suspicious fires that killed hundreds.

Dubbed mano dura, the "iron fist" approach, these repressive policies were widely popular. "People grew tired of the death and violence caused by the gangs, and they wanted to hear that someone was going to instill order and put the delinquents in prison. That repressive discourse became mandatory for politicians, as it gets a lot more votes than talking about prevention. People wanted to hear about vengeance and repression, not peace or dialogue. And that's what they got," said Felix Arevalo, a Baptist pastor in San Salvador who has worked on dialogue with gang members.

"Gang members were satanized. People thought the only solution was to kill them," said Pio González, a Catholic priest in San Salvador's impoverished San Luis Mariona neighborhood.

The problem was that *mano dura* didn't work. As heavily armed soldiers dragged gang members out of their homes and swept them off city streets, violence only increased. As prisons filled, cities like San Salvador and San Pedro Sula (in neighboring Honduras) started boasting some of the highest murder rates in the world.

Churches in El Salvador responded in several ways. Evangelical groups worked to convert gang members who were in prisons, and in many neighborhoods the only way to leave a gang, other than by dying, was to convert to evangelical Christianity. Yet gangs keep a close eye on former members who convert; any indication that it's a ruse leads to fatal consequences.

Catholics, long joined at the hip with the country's most conservative sectors, were a little more conflicted about gangs. In many ways the Catholic Church represented the exclusion and represented

Gangs became scapegoats for a long list of social evils.

sion that helped foster gangs. Yet Archbishop Oscar Romero and the progressive sectors that produced Christian-based communities were heavily invested in poor neighborhoods where the gangs thrived, and they set up several programs focused on keeping kids out of gangs.

t was a priest in one of these marginal neighborhoods who first tried to bridge the gap between the gangs and a government that seemed hell-bent on exterminating them. Antonio Rodríguez, a Passionist priest from Spain, came to El Salvador in 2000. He set up shop in the dangerous Mejicanos parish, starting programs to rehabilitate current gang members and job-training programs that sought to give youth viable alternatives to being recruited into the gangs. The Mejicanos neighborhood alone produces about one-tenth of the country's emigrants, and church activists there sought to provide options to succumbing to gang culture or leaving.

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JOB SKILLS: A hair salon in San Salvador employs graduates of a training program at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church that reaches youth affected by gang violence.

Rodríguez also sought to change the public debate about gangs by suggesting that they were a product of an unjust society. "There is not violence because there are gangs," he said. "There are gangs because there is violence."

In 2009, during the early months of the center-left administration of President Mauricio Funes, Rodríguez spearheaded a quiet but officially sanctioned effort to begin dialogue with the gangs. That effort ran aground on the shoals of geopolitics, however, as one of Rodríguez's key sponsors, Manuel Melgar, the minister of justice and public security, was isolated and eventually forced out of power under pressure from the United States, which chastised the government for Melgar's alleged role in a 1985 attack on U.S. military personnel during the civil war. The effort at dialogue fell apart, and Funes responded to public insecurity by stepping up repression, which led to greater gang violence. At one point Rodríguez read a public statement from the gangs that unleashed a torrent of accusations that the church was coddling delinquents.

Although the government officially eschewed dialogue with the gangs, Melgar's replacement, former defense minister David Munguía, tried a different tack. He enlisted Raúl Mijango—a former guerrilla leader turned politician turned disaffected activist—to talk with the gangs privately. Mijango embraced the role, but felt he needed someone from the church to lend a hand.

"The church is one of the few institutions that still has moral authority in this country," he told me. "We needed it to generate confidence in the process of dialogue, because no one had any trust in the government or political parties."

Mijango's recruitment pitch was rejected by several bishops who were leery of being attacked like Rodríguez until Fabio Colindres, the church's military bishop, agreed to help. It was an unlikely trio: Munguía, a hard-line general; Mijango, a former guerrilla; and Colindres, a conservative Catholic bishop. But the men took the mission seriously, and in March 2012 they brokered a formal truce between the country's two largest gangs. The murder rate soon dropped from almost 15 per day to about five per day.

The government initially denied having any role in the truce, but six months later Munguía admitted that he had helped arrange the transfer of several gang leaders to lower-level prisons, making it easier for them to communicate with their comrades on the street. Visitation was loosened, and soldiers were removed from the cellblocks. There were rumors of other concessions. In a country where hatred of the gangs runs deep, swapping murders for better prison conditions wasn't popular. Many interpreted it as a humiliating nod to the political capital the gangs had acquired through violence.

Nonetheless, the truce held steady for some 15 months before it began to unravel. Many observers blame its ultimate demise on opposition from the country's huge private security companies, which lost business as street violence dropped. "Those who grow rich from the blood and suffering of our people have converted insecurity into giant profits, and throughout the region they constitute one of the fastest growing business sectors," Mijango said.

All the bishops now support dialogue with the gangs.

Another culprit was the country's news media. "They have an ethical problem. Is their mission to tell the truth, or to sell the news? Unfortunately, in recent years a mercantile perspective has prevailed in the media, converting them into those who murder with information," Mijango said.

Carlos San Martin, a Spanish priest in Mejicanos, agrees, noting that yellow journalism has become the norm in El Salvador. "The news media make violence seem to be only a product of the gangs. They don't pay much attention to gender-based violence, domestic violence, and other forms of violence that don't originate with the gangs. That encourages the population to perceive the gangs as the principal or only violent actor, when it's really much more complicated," he said.

Resistance to the truce also grew among gang members, who relied on money gained by extortion and threats of murder.

Mijango suggests that the U.S. government, always a political force to be reckoned with, was never a big fan of the truce. "Violence in our streets is always used to justify foreign intervention in our lives and in our economy. Without violence here, the United States wouldn't be able to come and impose its security policies on us," he said.

Munguía was eventually removed from his post by the country's Supreme Court, which ruled that a military official couldn't

head the civilian police. Munguía returned to his job as defense minister pursued by allegations that the military had trafficked weapons to the gangs. His replacement, Ricardo Perdomo, did everything he could to discredit the truce. And as it unraveled, the murder rate climbed.

None of this was good for Bishop Colindres's public image. He'd already been shunned by other bishops who, church sources told me, were a bit envious of his public profile. When Colindres publicly washed and kissed the feet of gang members during an Easter week rite in 2014, his street cred among gang members soared, but the country's media pilloried him for coddling criminals. He withdrew from the process of dialogue and refuses to talk about it today.

Father Rodríguez. In 2014, at the behest of Perdomo, Rodríguez again tried to negotiate between the government and the gangs. But for reasons that still aren't clear, Perdomo turned against him and had Rodríguez arrested in July 2014 for smuggling phones into prisons. The government also released embarrassing recordings of the priest's telephone calls with imprisoned gang leaders. When Rodríguez left the country in September as part of a plea bargain to get him out of prison, most Salvadorans were glad to see him go.

If God is mostly paradox

So that things contrary to common sense
Seem suddenly truth revealed
And some unappealing sight
Is clearly *Imago Dei*, devilishly alight
As though lit within at core
By the very darkness we abhor
And symbols of my soul's best hope are cast
As models of betrayal, despair and death;
Then, Eve's fruit tasted and offered to Adam
Becomes Mary's Gift as First Fruit
Of a new covenant of pardon
And the abandoned Garden
Because of Him
Becomes the New Jerusalem;

So, let that mind be also in me,
The one that takes in my off-stage acts,
You know,
Those walk-the-walk naked facts,
Even my sneaky judas-pacts
And transforms them all
Into something nothing short of new,
Like being born,
Like out of any godforsaken Friday
Easter morn.

Warren Molton



ESCAPING VIOLENCE: Eduardo Javier Contreras, 19, learned bartending at a vocational training center.

His colleagues think he was betrayed. "Padre Toño [Rodríguez] did good work. His biggest mistake was confiding in government authorities, who stabbed him in the back," said González, who says it's still not clear what motivated the government's actions. "As some here have begun to say, a rightwing government kills priests, while a left-wing government throws them in jail."

San Martin, who took Rodríguez's place as head of the St. Francis parish, says Rodríguez was guilty by association.

"Anyone who gets close to the gangs is seen with suspicion. Padre Toño lived that in his own flesh," San Martin said. "Here in the parish people understood this better, as they'd seen his work and his dedication to resolving the problems."

San Martin's parish continues its job-training program, but even the perfect job candidate can have problems if that person comes from the wrong neighborhood.

"When youth go to get a job, if they say they're from a certain zone, the interview is over. If you say you're from Montreal [a gang stronghold], you're simply discarded," San Martin said. "And if you can't find a job, you've got three options. One, you accept that you're going to live in absolute poverty without a future. Two, you get involved in the dynamics of delinquency that give you certain guarantees and protection. Or, three, you migrate."

The parish has had some success working with companies to develop openings for graduates of its training program, but sometimes even corporate goodwill is not enough to overcome demographics. "People have told me I should move if I want a job," said Eduardo Javier Contreras, a 19-year-old graduate of the parish's bartender training program. "Employers ask me where I live, and when I tell them they say that won't work. Most bartenders work nights, and the employer gives you a ride home after closing. But no one wants to drive through my neighborhood."

Life may get more difficult soon in Mejicanos. At the beginning of this year, the national legislature approved a packet of new laws strengthening the powers of police and prosecutors in the fight against gangs. Government officials told police officers—who wear ski masks when patrolling neighborhoods with gangs—that they need not worry about being second-guessed when they use their weapons to shoot gang members. Bodies of executed gang members started to appear along roadsides, reminding many of the social cleansing carried out by death squads in decades past.

In Mejicanos the Passionist priests aren't easily scared off. They took charge of the St. Francis church in 1979, immediately following the martyrdom of two priests serving the parish. Although Father Rodríguez is gone, other members of the order remain. "It doesn't make sense to remember someone crucified 2,000 years ago if we don't accompany those who are crucified today," said San Martin.

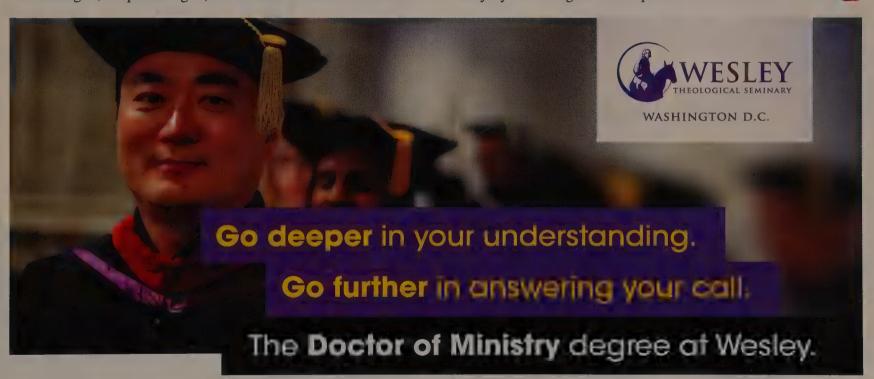
Although the latest renewal of *mano dura* seems to be backed by many in San Salvador, some activists suggest such popular support constitutes an indictment of the church's failure to do its job.

"The church preaches what people want to hear, which is hope for personal salvation and forgiveness for their sins, not the sins of others," said Baptist pastor Arevalo. "The church responds to a religious market that doesn't demand a call to forgive our enemies or work for peace even at the cost of our lives. The market demands a vindictive god, a repressive god, so that's what the church offers." Although it may not be popular, Arevalo and others continue working behind the scenes to make peace. They helped facilitate a new truce that gang leaders called a "unilateral gesture of goodwill." It took effect on January 17, and the results were evident immediately. According to the National Civilian Police, there was an average of 14.1 murders per day between January 1 and 17 of this year, but 7.6 murders per day between January 18 and 29. On January 22 there was no murder reported in the entire country—something that hadn't occurred in more than two years.

The Catholic bishops—all of them, not just Colindres—jumped on board February 1, announcing that they supported dialogue with the gangs. Auxiliary Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chávez announced the new posture, saying that gang members in El Salvador "have a right to be included, to be heard, for they are persons and they have families."

Rosa Chávez said the church wanted to "change the focus" of how society was responding to the gangs and criticized the repressive measures adopted by the government. "When one wants to find solutions to violence by using more violence, it won't work. We've got to break the molds and change paradigms, or else the deaths will keep piling up, increasing the pain of the families."

Rosa Chávez pointed out that the country's civil war was finally brought to an end through dialogue between the government and rebel groups. "Why can't we overcome violence today by following the same path?"



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NOTES FROM THE GLOBAL CHURCH

"What happens when you look at Christianity outside its Euro-American framework?

"That question becomes pressing when we look at numerical changes in the churches today—when, for instance, we realize that Africa will soon be home to the largest population of Christian believers on the planet.

"Although I describe my area of study as Global Christianity, that's a flawed phrase: if it's not global, is it really Christianity?"



Philip Jenkins's The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity is a landmark book for understanding contemporary global history. Publishers Weekly called it "a clarion call for anyone interested in the future of Christianity."

Philip Jenkins writes Notes from the Global Church for the Christian Century.





by Stephanie Paulsell

Wearable worship

YEARS AGO I was part of a new church that was meeting on Sunday evenings in the basement of a language school. The minister, Liz Myer Boulton, would show up in the late afternoon with what she called "church-in-a-box." Out of the big plastic bin that she carried around in the trunk of her car would come an altar cloth, candles, a Bible, a cross, and a cup and plate for communion. In half an hour or so, the basement would be transformed into sacred space, ready to welcome a congregation. With her box, Liz traveled light, ready to move as the spirit moved. Liz and her box could make a church almost anywhere.

Sarajevo-born artist Azra Akšamija has explored the notion of portable worship by creating "wearable mosques." Her Nomadic Mosque is a woman's suit of clothes that can be opened and unpacked to provide the wearer with a head covering, a prayer rug, and a compass to find the direction of Mecca. The wearer of Nomadic Mosque can pause anywhere to pray. Akšamija's work makes a place in the secular spaces of the world for Muslim prayer and shows a religious tradition moving through time and space, transforming the world around it and being transformed as well.

In her discussions of her wearable mosques, Akšamija often refers to the *hadith*, in which the Prophet Muhammad speaks of how the whole world is a mosque, made so by prayer and not by architecture. Her multipurpose suit of clothes is also a reminder that a mosque is a world—a place not only for prayer, but also for learning, resting, discussing, and gathering with a community. Akšamija's wearable mosque makes Muslim devotion and Muslim life visible in a society where Islam is often misunderstood and threatened. Another of her wearable mosques, Survival Mosque, comes equipped with an American flag for the wearer to display, along with earplugs to block out the sounds of shouted insults and a cleaning solution in case someone spits on the wearer as she prays.

I learned about Azra Akšamija's work from Jo Murphy, a student who was inspired to explore forms of portable, wearable worship within her own Unitarian-Universalist tradition. For her M.Div. thesis, she created three pieces: a preaching dress covered in flowers called *Petals Shook*; a dress made of mesh and barbed wire called *Standing Enmeshed*; and a hoop skirt strung with tea lights, *The Skirt That Lit Spiral*.

The preaching dress reveals and makes beautiful the vulnerability of the preacher. When the preacher shakes, the flower petals on the dress make a sound like leaves rustling and petals fall from the dress's pockets and onto the floor. The dress made of mesh and barbed wire is the one piece in Jo's collection that is too dangerous to be wearable. But when displayed on a sculpted form, it communicates strength and steadiness in the midst of pain—"a strong figure," as Jo puts it, that stands "waiting to minister." The skirt covered in tea lights recalls the lit chalice that's central to Unitarian-Universalist worship. Jo intends it to be worn by someone who's in need of support from the community. She imagines some of the people present lighting candles, bringing illumination and hope to one among them who cannot, in that moment, find the light of hope on her own.

These works of wearable worship are also works of critique that point to what's missing, to what's made invisible by our own fears and our society's fears. In Akšamija's work, it's the graceful gestures of Muslim prayer and devotion; in Jo Murphy's work, it's the life of the body and the vulnerability and pain that human beings carry everywhere, even into sacred spaces and the work of ministry. Both artists make these hidden dimensions of our shared human life visible, beautiful, and shareable.

Religious traditions are portable, always carried to new places.

Both also demand a response: someone to help the wearer of Nomadic Mosque release the prayer rug folded into her clothes; someone to acknowledge the trembling of the preacher; someone to light the candles on the dress. Azra Akšamija has said that she intended her Nomadic Mosque to foster communication in two directions—between the worshiper and God, and between the worshiper and anyone who stops to question, admire, or respond to the appearance of Muslim devotion in an unexpected place. Jo Murphy's work also invites our participation, for each piece tells a story that extends beyond the boundaries of the wearer's life to make a space for others' stories.

These works have the potential to transform our understanding of sacred space. These artists depict sacred space not as something set apart but as a place of intersection where the mosque and the world, the church and the body meet. They remind us that our religious traditions and practices are portable, even wearable, and that when we find ways to carry them in our journeys through the world, we learn over and over again that, as the Prophet taught, all the world is a mosque, a place where we might encounter God.

Stephanie Paulsell teaches at Harvard Divinity School.

Review

All the reform possible

by Steve Thorngate

y daughter spent the first six weeks of her life in intensive care. She finally came home, trailed by a long series of bills. The hospitals also sent letters announcing, "This is not a bill," then detailing what we would owe them if it were—that is, if we didn't have insurance. The total: more than \$250,000. What would we have done with such a bill? Borrowed from every family member and friend we have? Filmed a heartstrings-tugging fund-raising video? Gone bankrupt?

I know others who have gone through something similar and have concluded that the U.S. health-care system is broken and that Obamacare has done little to fix it. Are they right? Does the signature progressive achievement of the Obama years represent only minimal progress?

Journalist Steven Brill's first deep dive into health care was his massive 2013 *Time* article on "chargemasters": hospitals' minutely itemized and often wildly inflated price lists, on which they base the bills they send the uninsured and the nonbills they send people like me. Now Brill has written a detailed account of the Affordable Care Act—its origins, enactment, implementation, and future outlook. He concludes with his own prescription for health-care reform. The prescription is underwhelming, but the bulk of the book is invaluable.

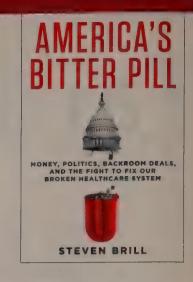
Some reviewers have teased Brill for his Bob Woodward-style exhaustiveness—for the detailed descriptions of Washington players and processes and for the extensive annotations of triple-sourced anecdotes. But he succeeds in crafting all of it into a fascinating narrative. He also reveals the complexity involved in any fair assessment of the ACA's heroes and villains.

It is easy to lose sight of just how thorny the path to reform was. Brill explains the New Deal politics that entrenched untaxed employer-based premiums as the core of the U.S. insurance system. He takes us through the earlier reform efforts that culminated in the Clinton-era failure which left Democrats chagrined. And he provides a dramatic play-by-play of the drafting and passage of the ACA, from the bipartisan promise of early conversations to the watered-down, one-party bill that stumbled onto Obama's desk in 2010. It's a fascinating look at a wild episode of congressional politics.

If anyone still doubts that the ACA's architects got all the reform they could, Brill's close study of the key players and their incentives ought to convince them. It's easy to imagine a reform bill that does more. It's almost impossible to see it getting enacted in recent history.

As Brill tells it, the primary sticking point was not about how much the bill would do, but about what it would do. Some advisors focused on expanding coverage, others on containing costs, and the expansion-of-coverage people won. Brill's account of the two groups' push and pull is revealing, as is his analysis of how various deals with the health-care industry amounted to punting on costs. Hospitals, drug companies, and device manufacturers would keep making money hand over fist; they'd accept mild reforms in exchange for new customers. Insurers would continue to pay a lot for all of this, and to charge a lot for policies, but with government subsidies to help more people buy

The president didn't talk much about the subsidies. The ACA's essence



America's Bitter Pill: Money, Politics, Backroom Deals, and the Fight to Fix Our Broken Healthcare System

By Steven Brill Random House, 528 pp., \$28.00

is to make health insurance affordable by helping people pay for it, and Brill makes much of how the White House preferred to credit this affordability to competition and efficiency instead. He says less about the fact that Republican attacks on what they called a government takeover of health care downplayed the facts about subsidies too. It's a fascinating feature of U.S. politics: the government redistributes money, and rarely does anyone—supporter or detractor—want to bring this up directly.

Though Brill is correct that Obama overemphasized the ACA's cost containment measures, he perhaps oversells the point. His reporting on internal policy debates betrays a preference for the cost-containment side. While he clearly sees the ACA's coverage expansion as a genuine achievement, at times he treats it like a side note. For him, the real issue is runaway expenses.

Is the cost-containment situation as bad as Brill makes it out to be? Lately health-care spending has been leveling off, not running wild. In one response to Brill's book, former Obama adviser Peter Orszag—a major character in the book—acknowledges that he and others got less cost containment than they

Steve Thorngate is an associate editor of the CENTURY.

wanted, but they did get some, he says, and it's working. Orszag adds that costs could drop further if the administration fully implements its authority under the law.

On the subject of implementation, Brill's criticism is more damning. He relays stories of families financially ruined by health-care bills not because the ACA didn't offer them help, but because the Obama administration hadn't gotten around to writing all the rules needed to deliver on that offer. Then there's the notoriously botched website for the national insurance exchange, an embarrassing tale of bureaucratic silos and sidelined technologists. Brill's takeaway is that senior officials were too aloof from the nitty-gritty of governing to have much chance of getting the website right. I'd add that it's always a problem when tech people are marginalized because higher-ups neither respect nor understand what they doand it's especially a problem when a complex website is no mere support tool but the very core of a program.

Such issues are common in large bureaucracies, private as well as public. Brill is right to criticize the administration for dropping the implementation ball, but he leans too heavily into the American suspicion of all things public. After all, a lot of the blame for the website debacle goes to CGI, one of the private firms hired to build it. And while the eventual rescue was accomplished by a team empowered to function like a tech start-up, it's hard for any large bureaucracy—public or private—to grant that kind of leeway long-term.

Besides, the insurance exchanges aren't complex because of government so much as in spite of it. HealthCare.gov has to retrieve detailed information from numerous other agencies to determine a person's eligibility for subsidies, then retrieve plan information from numerous private insurance companies. That's unprecedented. If Congress had created a single-payer plan, the website build would have been a breeze. Brill acknowledges this point in passing, but only to thump liberals for fixating on it, for being insufficiently invested in realpolitik. That's too dismissive. When we embrace public-private partnerships

as the only realistic way to enact public investment, we invite the problems that convoluted policy brings—and with them an even further drop in support for public investment.

Brill isn't wrong, of course. Single payer remains a far-off dream, and you go to war with the health-care reform you have. Still, it's galling that he takes such a steadily pragmatic look at others' reform ideas, only to turn idealistic when spelling out his own.

Brill's proposal for further reform is to permit hospital oligopolies within a given region, juicing the rise of dominant players that provide head-to-toe care for a large chunk of the population. These superhospitals would be encouraged to take on the function of insurers as well, as a few already have—thus reducing one industry's motivation to charge too much and the other industry's motivation to refuse to pay what the first industry demands. Instead of controlling costs directly, do it by changing industry incentives.

It's an intriguing thought. It also relies on quite a few things falling into place. Brill lays out a number of necessary regulations: standards for oligopolies, profit limits, executive salary caps, a requirement that executives be doctors themselves, an ombudsman's office for appeals, quotas of Medicaid patients, the end of the chargemaster and its inflated prices. It all sounds pretty good! Of course, so did the more aggressive reforms the ACA was forced to jettison, and so does single payer. Brill has a keen eye for the way politics has limited the reach of past reform efforts, but he doesn't always hold himself to the same realism.

Brill's proposal, however, is really just the book's coda. His main project is an insightful chronicle of the ACA, its achievements, and its limits. It's absurd how much a few weeks in the hospital can cost, and the ACA hasn't done much to stop those crazy letters with their inflated price lists. But my daughter's letters weren't bills, and I didn't pay them. I just gaped at them for a while and then filed them away. Today far more Americans can do just that—thanks to this compromised, convoluted, triumphant new law.



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The Paradox of Generosity: Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose

By Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson Oxford University Press, 280 pp., \$29.95

The Paradox of Generosity is a tale of L two ways of life. Bryan, whom we meet in the book, admits that he is "not Mother Teresa." At Christmas he prefers to give himself an extra gift rather than making a charitable donation. With his life wrapped up in his own needs, he finds himself overbusy, cranky, anxious, lonely, and prone to overindulging in alcohol. In the same household, his wife, Shannon, enjoys giving to others, especially at holidays like Christmas, and she volunteers as a soccer coach. She has a strong network of friends and has seen improvements in her mental and physical health as she overcomes an eating disorder.

Apparently Jesus was correct when he said that it is more blessed to give than to receive. My mother will be relieved to hear me say that. She was fond of quoting Jesus when my juvenile selfcenteredness reared its head too determinedly. Some of us, according to Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson, took our mothers' admonitions to heart and grew into adults blessed with a spirit of generosity that is demonstrated in our actions. As a result, we enjoy better health, more happiness, and a greater sense of purpose and satisfaction in our lives. Most of us, however, seem to have ignored our mothers and have developed into people focused primarily on acquiring things and holding on to them, seldom sharing ourselves or our possessions with others. Associated with this grasping posture are poorer health, less happiness, and a loss of meaning and sense of purpose for our lives.

Smith and Davidson document this connection in great detail. Paradoxically, despite the positive consequences of generosity, few Americans are generous people. By almost any measure of generosity, the majority of Americans are crowded at the ungenerous end of the scale. For example, the authors' survey indicates that only 2.7 percent of

Americans give away 10 percent or more of their income, while 86.2 percent give less than 2 percent. This pattern persists, sometimes to a lesser degree, across all forms of generosity.

Smith is a professor of sociology at the University of Notre Dame, where he directs the Science of Generosity Initiative, a large and ongoing research endeavor. Davidson is a doctoral student and a researcher on the project, a large-scale, multimethod study of American practices of generosity and respondents' well-being. The data were collected in a large national survey, a somewhat smaller survey of congregations in three midsize midwestern cities, and in-depth interviews in 40 households across the United States. The measures of generosity include financial giving, volunteering, relational generosity to those close by, blood and organ donation, and estate planning; the measures of well-being include happiness, bodily health, purpose in living, avoidance of depression, and interest in personal growth. Smith and Davidson show repeatedly that there is a consistent positive (though sometimes modest) correlation between generosity and well-being. The more generous one is, the better off one is.

Smith and Davidson do address the potential criticism that correlation is not causation—that is, the fact that generosity and a high level of well-being often occur together doesn't necessarily mean that generosity produces the giver's well-being. It could be the other way around. However, they suggest nine ways in which generosity could cause the giver's well-being. For example, generosity fosters and reinforces positive emotions that contribute to health and well-being, and it can trigger chemical systems in the brain that heighten pleasure, reduce stress, and suppress pain. Their causal arguments are largely drawn from others' research rather than their own data, which cannot demonstrate causal linkages because they are taken from a single point in time. They argue that the relationship between generosity and well-

Reviewed by Fred Kniss, provost at Eastern Mennonite University.

being is best understood as reciprocal and mutually reinforcing.

In the final two substantive chapters. Smith and Davidson take an intimate look into the lives of ungenerous and generous Americans. Thanks to their indepth interviews and visits in the homes of their subjects, Smith and Davidson are able to give us a nuanced picture of how individuals and families talk about generosity, explaining and justifying their choices about whether to share their time and possessions. Readers will get to know these representative households well, and in so doing they will be faced with questions about and gain insight into their own practices of generosity or miserliness.

Smith and Davidson took on a difficult task in addressing both a social science audience and a broader readership interested in generosity as a value or practice. It is not easy to satisfy both an expert and a general audience at once, though social scientists often try to do so. In this case, I expect that both audiences will be partially satisfied and partially unsatisfied by the authors' presentation and analysis.

Social scientists will no doubt be frustrated by the dearth of explanation for the patterns Smith and Davidson describe. They will be pleased, however, with the detailed descriptions and will likely be convinced that the relationship between generosity and well-being is a social fact. The book is likely to be cited frequently and to spark additional research testing potential explanations for the observed patterns.

The general audience is likely to balk at the number of tables and repeated discussions of the many bivariate correlations, even though the authors relegate most of the methodological technicalities to the footnotes and appendices. On the other hand, the interview-based chapters focusing on the real lives of generous and ungenerous people will spark many a helpful discussion.

For me, the most frustrating unanswered question is related to the paradox the authors mention in their introduction. If givers receive and graspers lose, why does such a large majority of Americans nonetheless choose to be ungenerous? In their concluding chapter, the authors exhort readers to consider the positive consequences of generosity and to become more generous themselves. But without an adequate explanation for how broad patterns of ungenerosity emerge in the first place, it will be hard for churches or policy makers to know how to improve Americans' generosity quotient beyond exhorting them to embody individual virtue. Smith and Davidson leave plenty for all of us to work on, churches and social scientists alike. They also give us a keen sense of the baseline from which we begin.

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The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope By Austen Ivereigh

Henry Holt, 464 pp., \$30.00

Thief among the multiple revelations in this book is that its author was tipped off about the identity of the new pope before the decision of the Vatican conclave was revealed. Austen Ivereigh is a former adviser to the retired archbishop of Westminster, Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, a cardinal who was involved in 2013 preconclave meetings but was too old to participate in the actual conclave that chose Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Between the appearance of the white smoke and the revealing of the new pope, Ivereigh reports, Murphy-O'Connor tipped him off that it might just be Bergoglio. This is the first time Ivereigh has put this anecdote-previously told only to friends—in print.

This tip was not the only thing that prepared Ivereigh to say something knowledgeable about Pope Francis from St. Peter's Square for a British news channel just seconds after the new pontiff emerged from behind the curtains on the balcony—while quite a few talking heads bungled things in those first moments. The months that Ivereigh had spent living in Buenos Aires 20 years earlier researching a dissertation on Argentinian politics and the church helped him as well.

Also important to The Great Reformer, the most expansive and important biography of Bergoglio yet published, are Ivereigh's claims about what happened in the secrecy among the cardinals before and after Bergoglio's election claims now denied by a Vatican spokesperson. The claims have led to a small controversy involving the author, Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor, and Pope Francis's office. Ivereigh seems to have overstepped the boundaries of friendship and confidence in the writing of his book. Even Murphy-O'Connor's press secretary (probably a former colleague

Reviewed by Jon M. Sweeney, a critic and author of The Pope Who Quit and When Saint Francis Saved the Church.

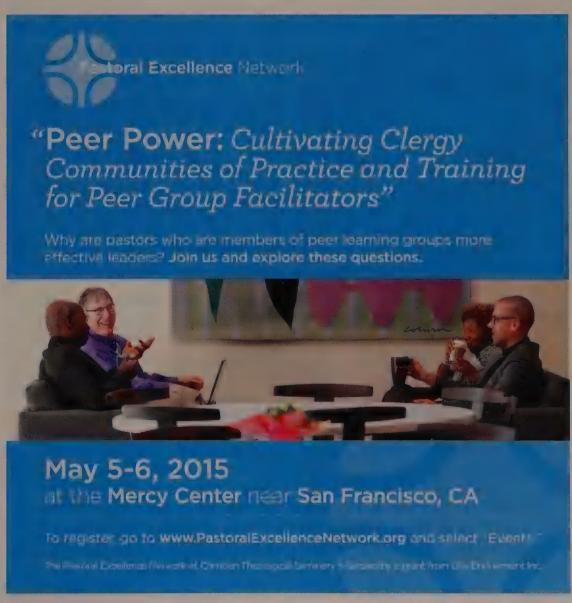
of Ivereigh's) has insisted that some of what Ivereigh wrote about his old boss is not accurate. Everyone is in an awkward spot. I suspect that Ivereigh overreached to arrive at original conclusions. Either that or he didn't realize the problems he might cause by telling the tales.

The troublesome central issue is a purported behind-the-scenes campaign before and within the 2013 conclave to support Bergoglio-who Ivereigh states conclusively was the runner-up to Ratzinger in 2005—as well as the suggestion of a conversation between Bergoglio and certain cardinals in which they asked him if he would accept the position if it were put to him. Ivereigh writes that Bergoglio responded to the effect that no cardinal could refuse such a request during a time of crisis for the church.

Campaigning has, of course, always been common in conclaves, as well as in papal elections not held in conclave in centuries past. Conclave (Latin cum clave; English "with a key") figuratively means "behind locked doors." But a prospective pope is never supposed to campaign for himself or participate in his own election, and Ivereigh makes it sound as if Bergoglio was almost urging along what some cardinals had in mind.

The Great Reformer was published at the end of November. On December 1, Vatican spokesperson Federico Lombardi issued a statement saying that all of the cardinals mentioned in Ivereigh's account "have expressly denied this description of events, both in terms of the demand for a prior consent by Cardinal Bergoglio and with regard to the conduct of a campaign for his election." The following day Ivereigh told Religion News Service that he regretted how he had phrased the scene and that he'd alter it upon reprint, removing any reference to cardinals expressly asking Bergoglio about his intentions.

This substantive, 450-page biography also addresses Bergoglio's conflict with Jesuits earlier in his career. A former Jesuit himself, Ivereigh is in a good position to understand Bergoglio's Jesuit



background, as well as the reasons he cut himself off from much of the order between 1992 and his election as pope. In Ivereigh's account this story receives the fullest treatment it's seen to date, at least in English.

The estrangement took place in 1992 after Bergoglio was made a bishop in Buenos Aires. Ivereigh tells us that Bergoglio was hardly known by most Argentines before 1992, and that only one other Jesuit had ever been made a bishop in Argentina. There must have been some professional jealousy, and soon Bergoglio was accusing the new Jesuit provincial, Ignacio García-Mata, of defaming him in a report to Rome. García-Mata had been asked to accommodate Bergoglio in the local Jesuit house until Bergoglio's new rooms were ready for him. But García-Mata quickly found Bergoglio to be an "interfering" presence in the ongoing work of the province, and he eventually asked him to leave. Ivereigh's endnotes reveal that one of his sources for this



narrative is an interview with García-Mata himself.

Every page of *The Great Reformer* is interesting. The book is beautifully written, well crafted from beginning to end. The title, however, is curious; I wonder if it was designed to appeal to non-Catholics. Ivereigh's point is more aptly expressed in the subtitle. Throughout his life, Jorge Mario Bergoglio has done what we see him doing so publicly now as Pope Francis. He has long desired to be a radical man of faith, seeking reform within the church and championing the poor regardless of whether it would further his career. Apparently, it's worked out all right for him.

The fact that such a man made it all the way to the Chair of St. Peter says as much about the desperate state of the church in early 2013 as anything else. This is the tone we pick up from those possible secret conversations among the cardinals to campaign for and recruit an Argentinian radical for highest office. Ivereigh clearly wants to bolster this perception and is a champion of the reforms happening throughout the church thanks to Pope Francis's influence and example for change.

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Progressive Evangelicals and the Pursuit of Social Justice

By Brantley W. Gasaway University of North Carolina Press, 336 pp., \$29.95 paperback

In 1985 evangelical activists marched through the streets of Washington, D.C. As the demonstration began, a spokesperson declared, "We're showing that we are willing to pay the price, to sacrifice, to go to jail, if necessary, to draw attention to all the assaults on human life that are now so abundant." By the end of the protest, police had arrested nearly 250 marchers for civil disobedience.

To those who assumed that the reference to human life derived from a singular animus against abortion, the march's route seemed bizarre. Activists stopped first at the White House to pray for "an end to the arms race and for the poor, its primary victims." Outside the Soviet embassy they prayed for the people of Afghanistan, "whose country has been brutally invaded by another arrogant superpower." At the Supreme Court they protested the "barbaric practice" of the death penalty. Not until their final stop at the Department of Health and Human Services did marchers intercede for unborn children.

In his survey of theologically conservative but politically progressive evangelicalism, Brantley Gasaway astutely examines the rally's idiosyncratic platform. He contends that Peace Pentecost-and the broader evangelical left that carried it out-offered a coherent social agenda. Grounded in a "public theology of community," it stood in stark contrast to the pervasive individualism of midcentury evangelicalism. The prophetic Jim Wallis of Sojourners magazine and the pastoral Ron Sider of Evangelicals for Social Action contended that sin expresses itself in more complex ways than person-to-person racism, violence against the fetus, and pornography.

These evangelicals declared that injustice often takes a social shape. Racism, which *Sojourners* called "America's original sin," could be seen in systems such as apartheid and housing policies. Sexism was perpetuated through cultural language and male privilege. None of these

structural critiques demanded a progressive theology. Instead, Wallis and Sider pled that a conservative hermeneutic of scripture demands social justice.

In Gasaway's telling, movement leaders sought sensible solutions to intractable problems. They declared same-sex marriage a civil right but a religious wrong. Sider sought to explain poverty as a result of both bad culture and excessive capitalism. *Sojourners* pursued a pro-life pragmatism that aimed to limit but not completely outlaw abortions, through government programs that offered contraception. Such centrist proposals, they hoped, could appeal to constituents on both the left and the right.

So why did the Moral Majority carry the day instead? The political homelessness of progressive evangelicals proved more decisive than the appeal of a third-way approach. In the wake of Peace Pentecost, Jerry Falwell declared that Wallis "is to evangelicalism what Adolf Hitler was to the Roman Catholic Church." Pro-choice women's groups vilified progressive evangelicals' pro-life position. Journalists just seemed confused. Attacked by secular and religious fundamentalists alike, progressive evangelicals were caught in a sharply divided party system not designed to consider third ways. An unsettling chapter on "the agony of abortion" narrates how Sider and Wallis alternately tried to avoid the issue altogether, guide their anguished constituency, placate Christian conservatives, and reassure pro-choice feminists that they weren't women-haters.

It is a complicated story told with considerable skill. But the dilemmas of progressive evangelicalism were even knottier than Gasaway suggests. Despite being progressive, the evangelical left nurtured antipathy toward Jimmy Carter in 1976, revealing the antiliberal instincts of early leaders. Wallis nurtured new left sympathies. In *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, the Anabaptist Sider criticized liberal hopes for unlimited economic growth.

Moreover, the evangelical left was much larger and more diverse than Sojourners, Evangelicals for Social Action, and The Other Side magazine. Reformed evangelicals associated with Calvin College, the Association for Public Justice, and the Institute for Christian Studies in Canada urged a less prophetic, more gradualist approach to social change. It

was a rich and diverse movement, but theological differences and ecclesiastical rivalry sometimes undercut the prospects for political success.

The fragmentation of the evangelical left stood—and stands—in stark contrast with the grand narrative of the Christian right. In that tale of declension, America once stood tall as a bastion of democratic, capitalistic, Christian light to the world, but now teeters on the precipice of secular humanism. The rescue mission articulated by the religious right proved to be a compelling political strategy in the context of racial fear, a growing federal government, and the cold war.

Perhaps progressive evangelicalism could have thrived in an era before the demise of southern Democrats and the rise of polarizing below-the-belt issues like abortion and homosexuality. Many advocates point to such an era: the 19th century, when a radical evangelicalism pioneered abolition and women's rights. Narrating the long history of evangelical politics, historian Randall Balmer contends that the religious right is the anomaly, not the evangelical left. Wallis, feeling a profound sense of displacement, often identifies himself as a 19th-century evangelical living in the 21st century.

Three decades after Peace Pentecost and more than a century since the supposed golden age of progressive evangelicalism-Gasaway contends that the movement "stands as strong as ever." Which is to say, not very strong at all. A close examination of Peace Pentecost's ground troops, which featured a high level of mainline and Catholic participation, shows that the event's evangelical image may have been inflated. If anything, conditions now may be worse than in the 1980s. The issue of abortion continues to roil the movement, and the debate over homosexuality may blow it apart entirely. Progressive evangelicals continue to be marooned between a Democratic Party driven by secular elites uninterested in practices of faith and a retrenched conservatism peddling a politics of fear. The evangelical left has indeed been left behind.

Reviewed by David R. Swartz, author of Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism.

BookMarks

Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: A Theological Commentary on the Bible

By Amy Plantinga Pauw Westminster John Knox, 376 pp., \$40.00

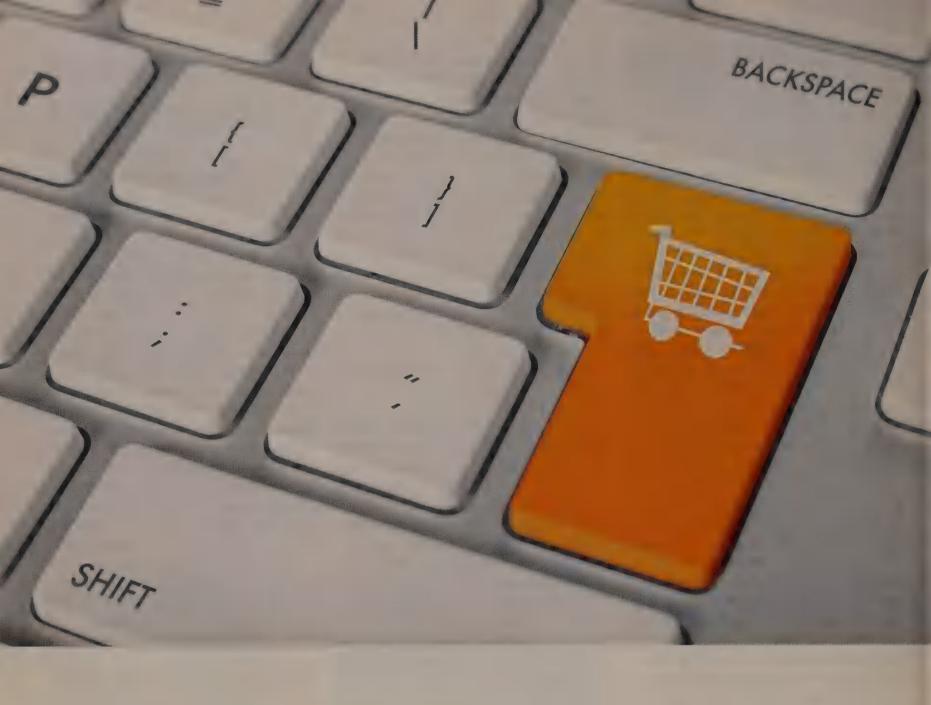
These two biblical books may be "loose cannons in the canon," but Pauw makes a case for how they are as relevant now as ever. The sages of Israel demonstrated an openness to learning from the wisdom traditions of their neighbors, an example from which we can learn, given the religious pluralism that marks our time. These books speak from a creation perspective rather than a redemption one, which is relevant in light of the ecological crises we face. These books-especially Ecclesiastes-have a tendency to speak to people on the margins of the religious community, and both speak about the problems of daily life. This is a theological commentary, and Pauw admits her fondness for Augustine, Kierkegaard, and the Niebuhr brothers, who expose the follies of human existence.

Doing the Math of Mission: Fruits, Faithfulness, and Metrics

By Gil Rendle

Roman & Littlefield, 156 pp., \$17.00 paperback

To the old debate about faithfulness versus effectiveness in ministry, Rendle offers another possibility: fruitfulness. But to ascertain whether leaders and congregations are fruitful, some form of measurement is needed. On the basis of work done in the United Methodist Church, church consultant Rendle introduces metrics for measuring fruitfulness in congregations, judicatories, and denominational structures. He anticipates that some readers will be defensive. Rendle suggests membership is not the most salient measure of fruitfulness. Ministry is about changed lives, changed congregations, changed communities because of the presence of Christ. Such outcomes demand to be measured, not counted—a metric involving description rather than quantification.



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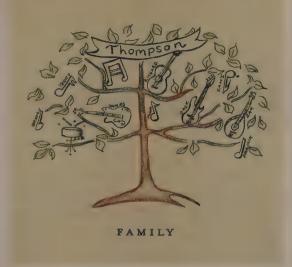
Family Thompson (Fantasy)

The story of *Family* begins with the unlikely reunion of a married couple who once made remarkable music together but then didn't speak to each other for years. Richard Thompson is one of the world's great guitar players, with sly songwriting skills and a sharp British baritone to match. Linda Thompson is a revered vocalist from the same folk-rock movement that launched Richard, her ex-husband. Together they recorded Shoot Out the Lights, the acclaimed 1982 album that chronicles their acrimonious split as much as it shows a duo at a peak of their creative powers.

They're together again, at least in the studio. And every note of *Family* is performed by the family—not just Richard and Linda but also a brood of musical children, extended family, and even one grandchild. The project may be a bit disjointed, but it's also intimate and musically engaging, with many of the songs fit for the clan's next bonfire.

Family is produced by Richard and Linda's son Teddy, himself an established musician, and he spells out his dilemma on the opener and title track: "My father is one the greats to ever step on a stage / My mother has the most beautiful voice in the world / And I am betwixt and between / Sean Lennon, you know what I mean." This could sound mawkish but it doesn't, given the stripped-bare, bittersweet musical setting.

The genetic lines sometimes blur. Grandson Zak Hobbs, 17, sings a lot like Uncle Teddy on "Root So Bitter," and the teenager plays guitar with panache and flash. Perhaps he takes lessons from Grandpa Richard, who plays hurdy-



gurdy on the track. Linda cowrites with Hobbs and sings lead on "Bonny Boys," which only reveals its subject near the end: a dying mother bidding farewell to her children. She doesn't so much grab the listener's heartstrings as brush them with sublime strokes.

As for the inevitable question, Richard and Linda don't appear in any duets or side-by-side in any sense, though she lends her backing vocals to "That's Enough." Richard's song of deep disillusionment shuffles along with a sing-along melody; he's known for framing such paradoxes in his solo work. He doesn't play the tasty slide guitar; that's James Walbourne, husband to Richard and Linda's youngest daughter, Kami.

Exuding warmth and lacking any thematic gimmickry, *Family* delivers on its unique conceit. It isn't entirely smooth going, but what family reunion is?

Chris Tomlin (sixstepsrecords)

Tomlin's latest collection of worship songs brandishes a full-band sound, yet many should adapt well to more intimate settings. The chorus of "Waterfall" uses infectious call and response, for example. "At the Cross" relates the salvation story with clever yet moving lyrics.

Awake Elise Erikson Barrett (self-released)

On her debut, this Duke Divinity School grad from South Carolina delivers inspired surprises to engage and delight the listener. It's a safe bet you've never heard "Nearer, My God, to Thee" in an acoustic blues setting, or the Police's "Invisible Sun" arranged for sultry piano and violin. Yet Barrett pulls it together with smoky-sweet vocals. She's a creative songwriter as well, as on "Nineveh," a minor-key movie in sound.

Solemn Meant Walks Solemn Meant Walks (self-released)

Layered, dense, and driving, this Chicago-based outfit recalls British new wave bands Lush, the Cocteau Twins, and Joy Division. Though her vocals sit low in the mix, singer and songwriter Ami Gloria shows ample confidence. Light also pierces the dark textures, as on "Highway": "Open your big bark eyes / Upon that big dark highway / I'll be walking along."

The Problem with Living in the Moment The Grownup Noise [self-released]

"My Ride's Almost Here" is a chamberpop gem à la Nick Drake, but the rock mode of this Boston band works equally well. "The Fight Against Paranoia" rides on tumbling rhythm, and "Try This Again" melds rustic accordion to scratchy, catchy guitar riffs. Paul Hansen's vocals telegraph literate lyrics, as on "Astronomy as Therapy": "The further out you go, the less you feel alone / The further out you go, the less you fear alone." Highly recommended.

The Whole Night Thru Sam Llanas (self-released)

Those who know Llanas from his time in the BoDeans will recognize his voice: still sharp and tough, yet infused with urgency on the leadoff track "Déjà Vu" and the plaintive rocker "The Best I Can." On the tender side, "I'm Still Alive" could serve as Llanas's theme song, given the ups and downs of his former band: "I'm grateful for another day / Another chance to find my way."

Reviewed by Lou Carlozo, a music producer in Chicago.

on Media

Breaking better

Tho do you want to be your lawyer? In the famed television series *Breaking Bad*, crooked lawyer Saul Goodman (Bob Odenkirk) says, "Everyone wants Atticus Finch for a lawyer. Until there's a dead hooker in the hot tub."

Now Goodman has his own television show, Better Call Saul, a spin-off and prequel to Breaking Bad. Six years before the opening scenes of Breaking Bad, Goodman was an Irishman named Jimmy McGill. (He changed his name and his ethnic identity because, as he says in Breaking Bad, "Everyone wants a Jewish lawyer.") At the beginning of Better Call Saul, it is 2002, and McGill is desperate for work. His car is a horror, he sleeps in his office at the back of an Asian nail salon, and his phone never rings.

He decides to feign a crisis to stage himself as a hero. He pays a billboard worker to fake a fall and then rescues the man as he dangles from the sign. The incident is recorded on videotape and plays all over the Albuquerque media.

McGill gets work: a rancher asks McGill to help him secede from the United States but tries to pay McGill with his own self-printed currency; a dad invents a talking toilet to help his child potty train and wants help with a patent. Eventually McGill can afford to buy a suit, but his "job opportunities" grow darker and more fraught.

Creator Vince Gilligan uses the new series to deepen and humanize characters from *Breaking Bad*. One of these is Mike Ehrmantraut (Jonathan Banks), a retired police officer who validates parking stickers at the courthouse and will never cut the perennially stickerless McGill a break. In *Breaking Bad*, Ehrmantraut was admired for his deadly

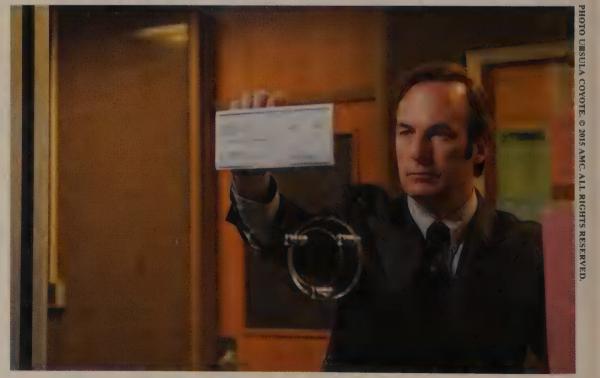
efficiency, but he evoked little empathy. In *Better Call Saul*, we learn more about Ehrmantraut's history, about the son who was killed by immoral police officers, and about his response to this crime. The story turns Ehrmantraut into an almost sympathetic character.

But Gilligan never tires of plumbing the depths of human evil by mixing crime drama with dark humor. Better Call Saul is slightly more tender in this regard than Breaking Bad, and the Horatio Alger nature of the plot makes every wrong thing that Saul does a little more understandable. But both series reflect Gilligan's view of reality, which is often so dark that it invites not bemused cynicism but downright despair. I hate humanity a little more every time I watch. Yet the comedy and the whimsical, beautiful camera work (the New Mexico desert is almost a character in this series) keep me watching.

Jimmy McGill's transformation (or is it deterioration?) into Saul Goodman is a moral study, albeit a twisted one. In an early episode, McGill tries to run a scam with two young skateboarders. When the scam goes awry and the boys' lives are threatened, McGill talks their would-be murderer into sparing them. He advocates that the gangster break one leg each and let the boys go. This is the best defense of a sewer rat lawyer. He arbitrates enough to save their lives, but not enough to save their tibias.

As a lawyer for drug dealers, Goodman's hands are never clean, but he can intervene to bring about slightly less violence. He operates with a kind of Niebuhrian ethic. Reinhold Niebuhr argued that Christians could try to keep their hands clean by abstaining from political participation, or they could get involved and try to limit the amount of violence in a troubled world. He advocated the latter stance.

In this dark parable, Jimmy McGill, Irishman turned faux Jew, demonstrates Protestant liberalism's advocacy of political participation for the sake of relatively less injustice. It's a dreary world out there. But at least everyone gets a lawyer.



DIRTY WORK: Bob Odenkirk plays lawyer Saul Goodman in Better Call Saul, a spin-off from AMC's Breaking Bad.

The author is Jason Byassee, senior pastor at Boone United Methodist Church in Boone, North Carolina.

GLOBAL CHURCH

Assyrians under siege

The Assyrian Christians of northern Iraq are among the people who have been massacred and kidnapped by ISIS militants in recent months. Such accounts are depressingly familiar to anyone who knows the region's history. In fact, this year marks a grim centennial. Besides being the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, it's the centennial of the year that the Ottoman Turkish regime struck at other Christian minorities whom it suspected of being sympathetic to Russia. The Assyrians call 1915 Sayfo, the Year of the Sword.

Assyrian Christians had very deep roots in the region, and their churches use a Semitic language related to Jesus' own Aramaic. In late antiquity, believers divided over the Person of Christ. The Monophysite branch evolved to become the modern-day Syrian Orthodox Church. Their Nestorian rivals formed the Church of the East, which remained a flourishing transcontinental institution through the Middle Ages.

By the 20th century, the Assyrian community had declined, split between believers affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church (Chaldeans) and the independent Assyrians. For historical convenience, the Assyrian label is often applied to all the Syriac-speaking denominations, including the Syrian Orthodox. Their combined population in 1914 was around 600,000, concentrated

in what is now northern Iraq and the borderlands of modernday Syria and Turkey.

These people were the targets of the Assyrian genocide. Through direct violence and starvation, the Ottoman regime killed around half that number, some 300,000 people, and some observers put the numbers even higher. Génocidaires also roamed freely in neutral Persia.

One problem with reporting such atrocities is that the stories become endlessly repetitive. Time and again we hear that Ottoman soldiers or Kurdish and Arab paramilitaries entered a village and carried away all the men for slaughter. Women were burned alive, children were bayoneted or drowned. The literature on the Assyrian genocide is appallingly full of such accounts, similar to the horrors visited on the Armenians and later the Jews. We easily become numb.

Even so, the Assyrian story is peculiarly traumatic for anyone who cares about Christian history. Much of the killing occurred in the province of Diyarbakir and in cities like Mardin and Nusaybin—all places that had once boasted a glorious Christian past. Diyarbakir was ancient Amida, a thriving monastic center and a patriarchal seat. Nusaybin was historic Nisibis, which in the seventh century was a metropolitan see with

six lesser bishoprics under its control.

Under the name Edessa, the nearby city of Urfa was once a legendary Christian center. Much of Syriac Christian scholarship stems from either Edessa or Nisibis. East of Mardin lies the Tur Abdin plateau, the Mountain of God's Servants, site of perhaps a hundred monasteries that have collectively been described as the Mount Athos of the East.

The Christian presence was still evident on the eve of the Great War, when the city of Diyarbakir was as much as 40 percent Christian. That world came to a sudden and bloody end. The governor of Diyarbakir was the monstrous Mehmed Reshid Bey, who killed perhaps 150,000 of his subjects, some 95 percent of the province's Christian population. When asked to explain how a doctor like himself could be so vicious, he had a simple explanation: Armenians and other Christians were dangerous microbes, and it was a doctor's sworn duty to kill such beings.

Throughout 1915 and 1916, names like Mardin and Diyarbakir featured frequently in letters from foreign diplomats and missionaries, always in the context of reporting mass murder. Modern scholars offer their heartrending cata-

logues of Assyrian fatalities: 7,000 killed in Nisibis, 7,000 in Urfa, 6,000 in Mardin, 5,000 in Diyarbakir. One of the many religious houses destroyed with all its monks was St. Gabriel, originally founded in 397 on the ruins of a Zoroastrian temple.

The damage was irreparable. To quote scholar David Gaunt, "The Syrian Orthodox Church specified the killing of 90,313 believers, including 154 of its priests and seven bishops, and the destruction of 156 church buildings. The Chaldeans reported the loss of six bishops, 50 priests, and 50,000 of its faithful. The Nestorians were so decimated and dispersed that they never managed to present any detailed figures." In 1918, Kurdish forces assassinated the Catholicos patriarch of the Church of the East, who claimed to trace his office in direct succession back to the apostles Thomas and Bartholomew.

Assyrians today form a global diaspora, with large concentrations in North America, Western Europe, and Australia. Unless we understand the central role of Sayfo in their thinking, we will not understand why they are so desperately concerned with current threats to surviving Christian communities in Iraq and Syria.

Philip Jenkins's Notes from the Global Church appears in every other issue.

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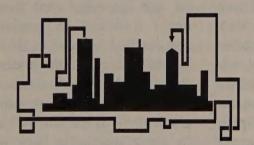
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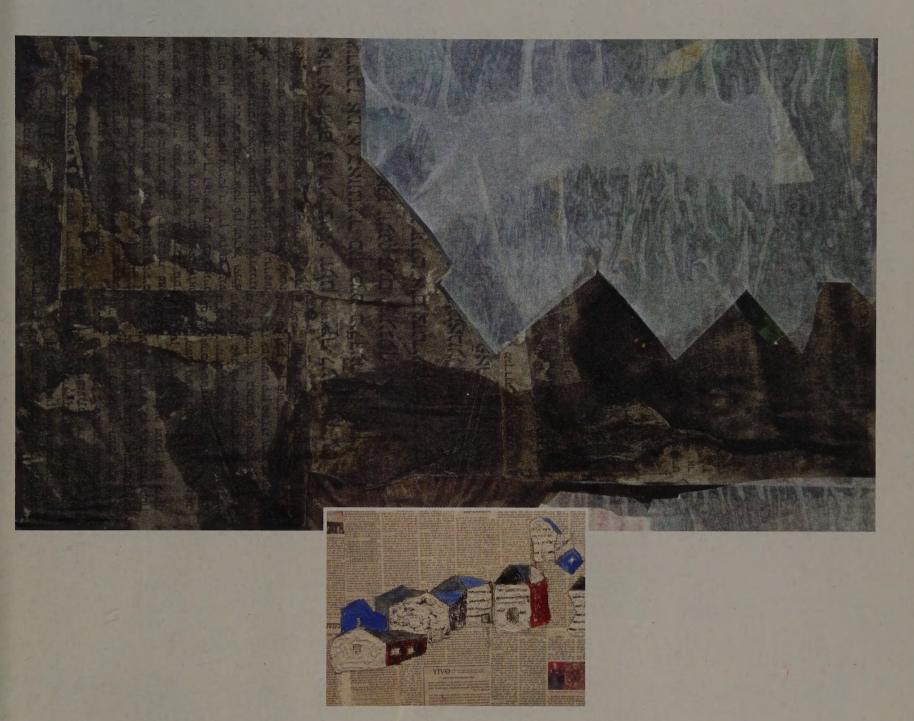
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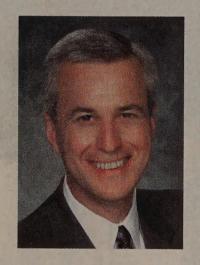
Shtetl Revealed | Language of the Village (inset), by Tom Glick

Tom Glick, who taught history at Boston University, is an artist as well as a historian. He uses pages of the *Forward*, an iconic Yiddish daily, in his layered art. Melted white beeswax provides a transparent surface over the Yiddish words. "I wanted the language to be elusive," he writes, "for the viewer to have to struggle to understand the writing. The writing, like the language itself and those who spoke it, was under attack." He layers in drawings of shtetls, small rural villages inhabited by Yiddish speakers in Eastern Europe. Glick was founder and director of the Shtetl Economic History Project, which documented shtetl life in the late 19th century through the 20th century.

Art selection and comment by Lil Copan, a painter and editor.



Read M. Craig Barnes @ Faith Matters



"Pastors dare not allow the limited and weak body known as church to be their measure. For that, they can only turn back to the Christ they have 'put on' in their baptisms. This is what actually frees pastors to return to the congregations that have enough problems to assure them that they'll never run out of work."

(from The Pastor as Minor Poet)

